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Vows for the Masses: Eison and the Popular Expansion of Precept-Conferral Ceremonies in Premodern Japan¹

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Abstract

Over the course of his roughly fifty-year ministry, the Japanese *vinaya* (*ritsu* 律) revivalist priest Eison 叡尊 (also read “Eizon,” 1201–1290) is said to have bestowed the bodhisattva precepts upon some 97,710 people. Many of these conferrals were given *en masse*, with tens or hundreds (and, according to some records, even thousands) taking precepts (受戒 *jukai*; Chns. *shoujie*) from Eison together, in single ceremonies. This study places Eison’s use of precept-conferral ceremonies in the broader historical context of East Asian, and especially Japanese, Buddhist practice. It then focuses on the particular methods used and innovations introduced by Eison and his *vinaya*-revival movement, paying close attention to the socio-political roles that

¹) I presented earlier versions of this research at the Stanford Center for Buddhist Studies Fellows Colloquium in February 2004; at the spring 2004 meeting of the Society for the Study of Japanese Religions held at the AAR (“On the Extra-Monastic Uses of the Precepts in Kamakura Japan”); and at the Conference “From Lay Buddhism to Engaged Buddhism,” held at Tzu Chi University, Hualien, Taiwan, November 12, 2004 (“Precept Ordinations as Ritual Commodity: Eison and the Popularization of Lay Precepts in Kamakura Japan”). I would like to thank the many people who provided feedback on those occasions. I would also like to thank the Stanford Society of Fellows in Japanese Studies, which provided a year of funding that made the early stages of this research possible.

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precept-conferral ceremonies played in relationships between monks, monasteries, and lay devotees in medieval Japan.

Keywords

Eison, bodhisattva precepts, ordination, precept-conferral ceremony, merit-making

The Merits of Leaving Home

Early Buddhist texts state clearly, and with considerable frequency, that “leaving home” (出家 *shukke*) — abandoning one’s secular life, taking the precepts, and joining the *sangha* — creates profound merit.² Of the many texts extolling the merits of leaving home, the *Xianyu jing* 賢愚經 (*The Sutra of the Wise and the Foolish*, Jpns. *Gengukyō*; T. 4, no. 202), an apocryphal sutra compiled by Chinese monks in Central Asia, became particularly influential in East Asian Buddhist circles.³ In the twenty-

Thanks are also due to John R. McRae, who provided thorough and thoughtful suggestions after reading an earlier version of this article. I am indebted to him for the many insights he shared with me. Jacqueline Stone, Jinhua Chen, Paul Groner, and Ryūichi Abé also offered valuable advice as I was undertaking this research. I would also like to thank an anonymous reader who provided both challenging critiques and generous suggestions. Finally, I am grateful to Minowa Kenryō and Katsuura Noriko, both of whom helped me think through conceptual issues related to the working of merit in precept-conferral ceremonies. Any mistakes that remain are my own.

² What, exactly, constituted *shukke* status often remained ambiguous, especially in Japan. In China, government control over the ordination process allowed for standardization, and only those who had received ordination certificates were recognized as *shukke*. In Japan, however, many laypeople declared themselves *shukke* simply by shaving their hair (or, in the case of women, cropping their hair) and donning monastic robes. Although the Japanese state also made attempts to control the *shukke* process by implementing an ordination certificate system based on Chinese models, its control of the process had grown lax by the middle years of the Heian period, when many aristocrats began to style themselves as *shukke*, often without official ordination certificates. From at least the mid-Heian-period forward, then, *shukke* as practiced among those in courtly social circles did not necessarily involve the abandoning of secular life, the joining of a monastic community, or even participation in a formal ceremony.

³ “The Sutra of the Wise and the Foolish” is Victor Mair’s translation of *Xianyu jing*. Mair demonstrates that *The Sutra of the Wise and the Foolish* was compiled by Chinese monks who had been studying Buddhism in Khotan. He further shows that the basic content of the sutra is based on Indic materials disseminated in Khotan. In particular, *The Sutra of the Wise and the Foolish* shows substantial overlap with the *Jātakamālā*

third section of the *Xianyu jing*, titled “Sirī-vaddhi Section on the Merit of Leaving Home” 出家功德尸利苾提品, leaving home is praised as an act of supreme merit:

Thus I have heard. Once, when the Buddha was at Karaṇḍa’s Bamboo Grove Monastery (Karaṇḍaveṇuvana) in Rājagṛha, Magadhā, at that time the World Honored One praised the act of leaving home, [saying that,] as a source of merit, its blessings are extremely great. If you release men or women [to leave home], if you release male or female servants [to leave home], if you allow the common people [to leave home], or if you yourself leave home and enter the Way, the merit [created by this act] is immeasurable. As for the rewards of *dāna*, they cause blessings to be received over ten lifetimes. One attains rebirth in the six heavens or in the [world of] humans ten times. This is not like releasing people to leave home or leaving home oneself. Why is this? As for the rewards of *dāna*, its blessings have limits. [But] as for the blessings of leaving home, they are immeasurable and boundless. Also, the rewards of upholding the precepts cause the transcendents who have mastered the five supernormal powers to receive the blessings of heaven and to reach the Brahmā world. Within the Buddha-Dharma, the rewards of leaving home cannot be fathomed. Even until one reaches *nirvana*, its blessings are inexhaustible. For example, if there were a person who erected a seven-jeweled stupa [so tall] that it reached the Heaven of the Thirty-Three, the merit that would be received would not equal that of leaving home. Why is this? It is because greedy, evil, and ignorant people can destroy a seven-jeweled stupa, [but] the virtue (lit., the “dharma”) of leaving home cannot be damaged. (T. 4, no. 202, p. 376b3–16)

The sutra goes on to relate the story of Sirī-vaddhi, a man who hears about the vast blessings of leaving home and decides, at the age of one hundred, to leave his household and enter the *saṅgha*. Having so resolved, he bids farewell to his wife, children, and servants and heads to the Bamboo Grove Monastery (Karaṇḍaveṇuvana). When he arrives and asks for the World Honored One, he is told that the Buddha is away. Unable to speak with the Buddha directly, Sirī-vaddhi shares his desire to leave home with Śāriputra. But Śāriputra’s response is cold and dismissive: “You go away. You are too old; you cannot leave home” (ibid. p. 376c27). Sirī-vaddhi continues to beg Śāriputra, but Śāriputra will not relent. Within a few lines, we find Sirī-vaddhi crying in frustration

of the poet Haribhaṭṭa; with variants of the *Daśa-karmapatha-avadānamālā* found in Central Asian languages; and with the Khotanese *Jātaka-stava*. See Mair 1999.

and sadness as he is told to leave the monastery. It is at this juncture that the Buddha appears to Sirī-vaddhi in a great light, asks why he is crying, and grants him the privilege of leaving home (377a16–b1). Śāriputra, of course, had considered the question only from the perspective of whether or not an old man could contribute to the life of the monastery and had failed to have compassion for the old man and his desire to create merit. But the blessings of leaving home, this story teaches, is something that the Buddha makes available to young and old alike (376c13).

An important concept at work in this story is the notion that in the act of leaving home, it is one's personal resolve to abandon the world and take up the Buddhist path — and not one's ability to make quantifiable contributions in the Buddhist community — that produces great merit. Even those unable to assume key roles in the monastic order, then, can access the merit of leaving home. In addition to elderly men like Sirī-vaddhi, whose physical condition would not have allowed him to work in the monastery alongside younger monks, kings and other elites whose social positions prevented them from taking up life in a monastery, were also able to “leave home.”

This same theme is picked up in the *Foshuo chujia gongde jing* 佛說出家功德經 (*Sutra on the Merit of Home-Leaving*; Jpns. *Bussbō shukke kudoku kyō*, T. 16, no. 707, translator and date unknown), a text that Daoshi 道世 (591–683) cites, alongside the *Xianyu jing*, in his own influential discussion of the merits of leaving home (see chapter 22 of his *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林). The *Foshuo chujia gongde jing* centers on the story of a prince named Beiluoxianna 鞞羅羨那. When the Buddha realizes that this prince, who lives a life of unapologetic hedonism, will pass away in seven days and fall into the hell realms, he sends Ānanda to warn him. Attached to his life of pleasure and luxury, the prince is unwilling to leave home right away, but he says that he will take vows on the seventh — and last — day of his life. As promised, the prince comes to the Buddha seven days later and takes vows. After maintaining the precepts for one day and one night, he dies. The rewards of these twenty-four hours of home-leaving, the reader is told, are immeasurable: the prince avoids hell, is reborn into the upper levels of heaven, does not fall into the three lower paths for twenty kalpas, and eventually becomes a pratyekabuddha. The primary teaching of this sutra

overlaps with that of the *Xianyu jing*: leaving home and taking the precepts creates more merit than any other Buddhist activity; its benefits are inexhaustible and are always worth seeking, even during the last moments of one's life.

The attitudes towards taking the precepts presented in these two texts were considerably influential in East Asia. Daoshi cites the primary narratives of both sutras in his encyclopedic *Fayuan zhulin*, which was circulated widely and studied carefully, both in China and Japan. The central terms and themes of the *Xianyu jing* can also be found both in a variety of subsequent texts, ranging from the early sixth-century Chinese scholarly work *Jinglü yixiang* 經律異相 (T. 53, no. 2121, by Baochang 宝唱) to the early twelfth-century *Konjaku monogatari shū* 今昔物語集, a collection of popular tales compiled in Japan (Kashiwahara 1998:58c). Many tales in the *Konjaku* borrow stock phrases such as “it does not equal the merit of leaving home” (不如出家功德) from the Buddhist doctrinal texts mentioned above, usually in the context of explaining why leaving home and taking the precepts is superior to some other form of Buddhist merit-making.

Of particular interest here is the degree to which texts extolling the merit of leaving home came to associate the act of taking the precepts with that of leaving home. In many texts, taking the precepts came to be viewed as synonymous with leaving home. Indeed, the two were often grouped together in the single phrase *chujia shoujie* 出家受戒, “to leave home and take the precepts.” This compound can be found in dozens of *sutras* in the Taishō canon and in Japanese literary sources as well.⁴

The close association between leaving home and taking the precepts meant that the merit associated with leaving home also came to be associated with taking the precepts. Chinese texts advocating the bodhisattva precepts also came to suggest that the act of taking the bodhisattva precepts, even when such precepts were taken alone (rather than as a supplement to the monastic precepts of the *vinaya*) and did not constitute home-leaving, was one of vast merit. And thus we can find a number of texts that shorten the more traditional notion of the “merit of leaving home and taking the precepts” (*chujia shoujie gongde* 出家受戒功德) to speak instead of the “merit of taking the precepts” (*shoujie*

⁴) See, for example, *Genpei jōsuiki* 源平盛衰記, chapters 9 and 43.

gongde 受戒功德).⁵ In formal monastic practice, of course, those *shoujie* (Jpns. *jukai*) taken by novices and monks and those taken by lay devotees — in other words, those that counted as initiation into the priestly order and those that did not — were always clearly distinguished. Still, the close association between the two acts meant that many came to view the precept-conferral ceremony as one that transmitted the merit embodied in the act of leaving home. Even ordinary laypeople could access some of the merit associated with home-leaving by taking precepts in a formal ceremony that simulated the ordination ceremony of those who were, in fact, leaving the lay life. In Japan, the situation was even more complex: from the mid-Heian period, many lay elites took the *endonkai* (perfect and sudden precepts)⁶ of the Tendai school and declared themselves *shukke*, even when they did not become official members of the monastic order. In these cases, laypeople clearly believed that *jukai* taken outside the official monastic protocols could still render recipients home-leavers and could still bestow upon them the merits of leaving home.

Conceptual overlap between the *jukai* and the act of leaving home is also evident in the practice of taking the precepts as a means of preparing for death. The logic operative here takes us back to the *Foshuo chujia gongde jing*: it was believed that if one were to take Buddhist vows just before death — as Prince Beiluoxianna did — one could secure a favorable rebirth and avoid suffering in the hell realms. What's more, as noted in the passage from the *Xianyu jing* translated above, the merit of taking precepts was deemed powerful enough to extend beyond the human realm in order to save spirits as well. Thus we find in the *Hae-dong Kosŭng Chŏn* (*Lives of Eminent Korean Monks*), for example, the story of a protective spirit who asks the monk Wŏn'gwang for the precepts, saying, "My end is drawing near, and I want to receive the Bod-

⁵ See, for example, the *Pusazang jing* 菩薩藏經 (T. no. 1491, translated by Saṃghabhara), 1089a1, and Guanding's *Pusajie yishu* 菩薩戒義疏 (T. no. 1811), 569a2.

⁶ According to the Tendai school, its *endonkai*, or "perfect and sudden precepts," embodied the essence of all forms of the precepts, including the traditional *vinaya* precepts, the Mahāyāna bodhisattva precepts, and the esoteric *sanmaya* precepts. The Tendai school used its *endonkai* both to ordain monks and for precept conferrals upon laypeople. For a fuller explanation of the *endonkai*, see Bodiford 2005b:12–13; and Stone 1999:18–19, 126–28.

hisattva ordination [i.e., precepts of the *Fanwang jing*] so that I can be qualified for eternity” (Lee 1969:77).

Precept-conferral ceremonies thus point to the particular ways in which the merit of acts associated with leaving home came to be made available to lay audiences in East Asia. A related phenomenon within Southeast Asian Buddhism is better known: here I refer to Theravādin traditions of temporary home-leaving that allowed laypeople wishing to access the merit of leaving home to do so without making a long-term commitment to monastic life. In Thailand, for example, it became common for young men to receive ordination, to spend a short period of time living as a monk at a temple, and then to disrobe and return to lay life having created a significant store of merit. No similar practice of temporary ordination and monkhood gained currency in East Asia. The practice related to home-leaving that came to be valued as a merit-making activity in East Asia was not time spent living as an ordained member of a monastic community, but rather the act of receiving precepts in a formal ceremony. Precepts taken by laypeople in East Asia did not result in the conferral of either long-term or temporary clerical status; as such, the ceremonies in which they were conferred cannot be described as ordinations. But insofar as these precept-conferral ceremonies were modeled upon — and in some cases carried out in conjunction with — the ordination ceremonies of monks and nuns, the merit they were thought to bestow upon their recipients was conceptually related to the merit of leaving home. In this sense, we might view the popularization of precept-conferral ceremonies in East Asia as related, in broad terms, to traditions of temporary home-leaving in Southeast Asia. Although the practices made distinct demands of their participants, both allowed laypeople to simulate (albeit to different degrees and in different ways) the process of becoming a monk or a nun and to acquire, in the process, great merit.

Models of Precept Conferral

Precept-conferral ceremonies made available to members of the laity in East Asia varied widely, but the following three types appear to have been the most common. First, there were private ceremonies for elites who could afford to invite Buddhist monks to their own homes. These

ceremonies usually involved members of the royal family or high aristocracy. Although the practice experienced waves of popularity and decline, many emperors and kings in China, Korea, and Japan received conferrals of the precepts, usually the bodhisattva precepts of the *Fanwang jing* (or, in Japan, the Perfect and Sudden Precepts of Tendai lineages), from eminent Buddhist priests. While it was most often a single, powerful individual who sought the precepts, others in his or her entourage often followed suit, taking the precepts along with the individual who had invited the precepts-granting monk to the elite residence. Depending on the context, these private ceremonies were directed at a variety of outcomes: they sometimes marked one's devotion to a particular Buddhist teacher, for example, but they could also be used as a means of preparing for death. In some contexts, such as that of Koryŏ rule, the conferral of precepts upon imperial figures became an annual rite carried out as a matter of course rather than in response to acute need. According to Peter Lee, Koryŏ kings received the bodhisattva precepts from the National Preceptor every year, between 1032 and 1352, on the fifteenth day of the sixth month (Lee 1969:77 n. 379).

The remaining two types of lay precept-conferral ceremonies were more public in nature but differed in location and timing. One type of public precepts ceremony was held on fixed days, usually once or twice per year, at large temples. Many temples ordained monks only on certain days annually or every few years. On these days, they would hold large *shoujie-hui* 授戒会 (Jpns. *jukai-e*), or precept-conferral ceremonies, which were often several days in duration. At some temples, laypeople would be incorporated in these ceremonies and would be given the opportunity to take either the bodhisattva precepts or the lay precepts. Finally, both in China and in Japan, certain charismatic Buddhist priests traveled through the countryside and conferred precepts upon commoners *en masse*. These ceremonies, which typically centered on the ten major bodhisattva precepts, could take place on any day of the year, according to the needs of the community being served, and did not require the existence of an established precepts platform.

With these three types of lay precept-conferral ceremonies in mind, we will now turn to the Japanese case. While all three models can be found in Japan, private ceremonies involving the elite appear to have been the most common form in which precepts were formally con-

ferred upon laypeople in early Japan. As we will see below, mass conferrals of the precepts upon non-elites did take place at least as early as the Heian period, but only on a limited scale. The popularity of such ceremonies spread, however, during the mid-Kamakura period, around the time that Eison's *vinaya*-revival movement began to gain momentum.

Private Precept-Conferral Ceremonies for the Lay Elite

Priests performed private precept-conferral ceremonies for members of the imperial family and aristocracy with great regularity throughout early Japanese history. This practice, which appears to have first gained currency during the eighth century, grew increasingly fashionable during the Heian and Kamakura periods. Chinese *vinaya* master Jianzhen's (688–763; Jpns. Ganjin) 753 visit to Japan surely played a large role in the spread of such ceremonies within in Japan. Jianzhen, who is recognized as having transmitted authentic *vinaya* monastic ordinations to Japan, established an ordination platform at Tōdaiji. Atop this platform he is said not only to have ordained monks, but also to have bestowed the major bodhisattva precepts upon Emperor Shōmu and Empress Kōmyō. Japanese narratives of Jianzhen's visit thereby suggest that the conferral of precepts upon members of the royal family in Japan dates at least to the eighth century. When, exactly, laypeople of lower status — courtiers and even commoners — began receiving precepts in formal ceremonies is less clear. We do know, however, that by the ninth century, the Tendai priest Ennin 円仁 (794–864), for one, was bestowing a variety of precepts upon a wide range of court elites. While these ceremonies were private in nature and were limited to those associated with the court, they often involved large numbers of lay participants who would receive precepts together, in single ceremonies.

The *Jikakudaishiden* 慈覺大師伝, a biography of Ennin, includes many passages that describe Ennin's conferrals of the precepts upon large groups of court elites. In the year 848, for example, he is said to have been invited by the high-ranking courtier Tomo no Yoshio (809–868) to bestow the esoteric *sanmaya-kai* 三昧耶戒 upon over one thousand courtiers.⁷ The

⁷ The *sanmaya* precepts refer to four vows to be taken by those preparing for esoteric

next year he was invited to give the bodhisattva precepts to the Emperor Seiwa (850–880), and in 860, he engaged in several large-scale precept-conferral ceremonies at court. In the fifth month he gave bodhisattva precepts to Emperor Junna's consort, her close relatives, and other members of her entourage, totaling over 150 people. He is also said to have administered the *sanmaya-kai* to 270 people on this occasion. Later, in the eighth month of 860, he is said to have given the bodhisattva precepts to Emperor Junna's consort and to members of her entourage yet again, this time granting vows to more than 170 individuals.⁸

By the tenth century, taking formal bodhisattva or other precepts from a prominent *kaishi* 戒師, or precepts priest, was a well-established and highly fashionable practice. These ceremonies often constituted *shukke* 出家, or home-leaving, especially if the recipient chose to take on the appearance of a monk or nun following the ceremony, to intensify his or her daily devotions, and to change his or her lifestyle, perhaps by moving into a small chapel on the grounds a family villa or by taking up the itinerant life of a pilgrim.

But precept-conferral ceremonies did not always lead to such changes: many took the precepts without the intention of taking on a monkish appearance or of engaging in serious Buddhist study or practice. They sought the precepts instead as a way of forging *kechien* 結縁, or positive karmic ties. Formal conferrals of the precepts were often carried out as merit-making ceremonies believed to bring what the *Xianyu jing* and *Foshuo chujia gongde jing* refer to as merit (功德) and blessings (福). Many sought conferrals of the precepts in times of illness, danger, or immanent death. The aristocratic diaries of the Heian period are replete with records of aristocrats calling upon priests to administer precepts to women whose lives had become threatened by a difficult childbirth, or to individuals believed to facing imminent death (Okano 1998:81). Many elites sought the precepts during times of health and prosperity as well, simply as a means of gaining personal protection and accumulating good merit. Because precept ceremonies were understood as merit-

initiation (*kanjō* 灌頂, Skt. *abhiṣeka*). Candidates are to promise that they will not do any of the following: (1) abandon the True Dharma; (2) abandon their *bodhicitta*, or aspiration to attain enlightenment; (3) treat the True Dharma with stinginess or petty-mindedness; (4) commit any action that harms sentient beings. Fukuda 2001:93a.

⁸⁾ *Jikakudaishiden* 慈覺大師傳, in Hanawa 1923–28, vol. 8b:691b, 693b–694a, 696b.

creating events, individuals often took the same sets of precepts on multiple occasions.

For laypeople, then, the religious and social significance of a given precept-conferral ceremony was contextual; its meaning frequently depended on the particular needs of its recipient or recipients, needs that were often determined by age, health, and marital status. Precepts taken during the early and middle years of one's life were often regarded as ceremonies that created merit or brought healing, while those taken later in life were often used to mark a transition into retirement, to signal that one was giving up the obligations of the household life in order to prepare for death. When used as a means of preparing for death, precept conferrals were typically understood as *shukke*.

The dominant role played by Tendai priests within the religious world of the Heian court meant that, on the whole, elite courtiers who sought the *jukai* received the Perfect and Sudden Precepts of the Tendai school. Their *jukai* ceremonies were typically held in the privacy of their apartments. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the Tendai priests Genshin (942–1017) and Ryōnin (1072–1132) composed manuals that set the standards by which the conferrals of precepts upon royalty and courtiers were to proceed. The manuals, Genshin's *Shukke jukai sahō* 出家授戒作法, and Ryōnin's *Shukke sahō* 出家作法, both draw upon what had become, by their time, a well-established rhetoric on the merits of leaving home. Tendai priests continued to confer the perfect and sudden precepts (*endonkai*) on courtiers throughout the Heian period, and as time went on, these ceremonies were performed with increasing frequency. By the thirteenth century, many members of the court took the precepts not just several times over the course of their lifetimes, but several times per year. As Mitsuhashi Tadashi has suggested, Heian aristocrats viewed religious merit as something to be pursued in abundance: because it was believed that one's fate in the next life was determined by the merit one had accrued, it made sense to commission as many rituals as possible, and to make each ritual as extravagant as possible.⁹ Precept-conferral ceremonies, too, are best understood within the context of this greater emphasis on merit making.

A somewhat humorous episode from the *Toganoō Myōe Shōnin denki*, one of the biographies of the Kegon priest Myōe 明恵 (1173–1232),

⁹ Mitsuhashi 2000:394–400; 437, 497–99, 511, 531, 771.

illustrates the degree to which ceremonies offering precepts to members of the laity had become a taken-for-granted part of court life by the twelfth century. This episode relates Myōe's encounter with the Imperial Lady Shikikenmon'in (d. 1251), who had requested the precepts from him. According to the narrative, Myōe was insulted by Shikikenmon'in's failure to treat him — and the ceremony itself — with proper respect. The passage explains that Shikikenmon'in had grown used to taking the *jukai* from behind a blind as she sat, elevated above the precepts priest, in her own private quarters and without engaging in any real interaction with the priest. When Shikikenmon'in orders Myōe's to perform the ceremony in this same manner, he boldly admonishes her, reminding her that the *jukai* is no frivolous matter and that, as the recipient of the precepts, she is required to show her preceptor proper respect. Having been reprimanded, Shikikenmon'in is full of regret and embarrassment:

The Imperial Lady, who had [up until then] thought that anyone would do and who had been inviting those [priests] whom she did not truly respect, saying that she needed to receive the precepts but then sending them away afterwards, was aghast. She came out from behind the blind and apologized profusely, expressing her regrets. She [then] went over to the ritual platform in the Gojibutsu Hall, climbed atop it, and received the precepts with ever-truer faith. After that, she said that she especially respected this master [Myōe], and that, until her death, she remained a deeply devoted patron.¹⁰

The Shikikenmon'in example is instructive insofar as it suggests that by the twelfth century, Japanese courtiers were taking the precepts both with frequency and in accordance with their own personal preferences. This narrative reflects the tendency for elites to receive the precepts multiple times and from multiple *kaishi*, or precepts teachers, all in an effort to build up vast stores of merit. Shikikenmon'in, for one, is described as having commissioned many priests to perform this same ritual on a regular basis. The passage further indicates that elites understood precept-conferral ceremonies as a kind of ritual commodity easily acquired through financial means. Concern with upholding the pre-

¹⁰ *Toganoo Myōe Shōnin denki* 梅尾明恵上人伝記, in *Myōe shōnin shiryō* (Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1971–87), 354–55. In some other versions of the story, Myōe gives the precepts to Kenreimon'in (d. 1213) rather than Shikikenmon'in.

cepts received, or with cultivating personal morality, appears to have played little, if any, role at all in Shikikenmon'in's commissioning of the ritual.

Public Precept-Conferral Ceremonies for Ordinary Laypeople

Although the degree to which mass precept-conferral ceremonies for laypeople were held in India and Central Asia is unknown, recent scholarship has suggested that the practice may have spread within China as early as the fifth century. The *Lives of Eminent Monks*, for example, tells of a monk named Daojin 道進 who bestowed the bodhisattva precepts on over 1000 people in the fifth century. Following the Northern Wei defeat of the Northern Liang in 439, Daojin fled with members of the Northern Wei's Juqu clan to Turfan. As Nobuyoshi Yamabe has suggested, the discovery in Toyok of a copy of the *Youposajie jing* 優婆塞戒經 (*Sutra on the Lay Precepts*, Skt. *Upāsakaśīla sūtra*, T. 24, no. 1488) suggests that Daojin successfully spread within Turfan the practice of conferring precepts upon laypeople (Yamabe 2005:21). Large-scale bodhisattva precepts ceremonies that included lay masses appear to have gained greater prevalence in China during the seventh and eighth centuries. Daoxuan's (道宣, 596–667) *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集 (T. 54, no. 2134) and *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 (T. 50, no. 2060), in particular, make frequent reference to such events (cf. Shinohara 1994:81–90). The tenth-century *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (T. 50, no. 2061) also mentions the practice, noting several seventh- and eighth-century figures said to have bestowed precepts upon hundreds or thousands of laypeople. This text tells us that the master Yinzong 印宗 (627–713), for example, built ordination platforms throughout China, bestowing the precepts on many people. It also tells of a priest named Xuanyan 玄儼 (675–742) who is said to have given the precepts to over 10,000 people in the areas now known as Jiangsu and Zhejiang. And, as John McRae (2005:87–88) has pointed out, Xuanyan's disciple Dayi 大義 (691–779) is also famed for large-scale conferrals of precepts upon laypeople: the *Song gaoseng zhuan* says that, over the course of his career, Dayi bestowed the precepts on over 30,000 individuals.

Similar practices may have been implemented in Japan as early as the Heian period. Albeit limited, there is some evidence that certain

temples included laypeople (both commoners and elites) in public ordinations during the Heian period. One such example can be found in the 984 *Sanbōe kotoba* of Minamoto Tamenori. In the twentieth fascicle of the third volume, Tamenori mentions that bodhisattva precept ceremonies were held annually at the Nara temple Hasedera 長谷寺. He describes the event as a public one open to the local community. On the day that the ceremony is held, he writes, “devout laymen and laywomen gather to participate. There are others who come simply to watch and listen.” In explaining the origin of the bodhisattva precepts ceremony, Tamenori says that “the Masters of T’ien-t’ai and Nan-yüeh promoted this ordination [or ceremony],” while “Ganjin [Jianzhen] and Dengyō [Saichō] fostered it” in Japan (*Sanbōe kotoba* 3.20; trans. Kamens 1988:321). Of particular interest is what comes next: Tamenori describes the manner in which monks typically receive the bodhisattva precepts and then adds, “in some places lay[people] may receive them as well” (ibid.).

Unfortunately, the degree to which laypeople participated in Heian-period bodhisattva precept ceremonies outside Hasedera remains largely unknown. Tamenori hints at the possibility of a widespread practice, but few other sources mention similar rituals. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the tradition of holding bodhisattva precept ceremonies once per year is quite common; many temples, including those in Korea, Taiwan, and North America, continue to practice the rite as an annual one held within the temple. Ordinations in early Japan appear to have been held in the fourth month of the lunar year (see *Sanbōe kotoba* 3.19). In many places, they are still held during this same time of year.¹¹

Large-scale lay bodhisattva precept ceremonies gained greater visibility during the Kamakura period. This increased popularity is undoubtedly linked to two innovations in particular: first, itinerant priests began to hold such rituals at local temples in the countryside, places perhaps more accessible to members of the laity; and, secondly, priests began to offer the rites on a more frequent basis. A passage from Fujiwara no Teika’s diary *Meigetsuki* reveals that Myōe, for one, performed precept-conferral ceremonies for the laity in Toganoo twice monthly:

¹¹⁾ For a more detailed explanation of annual ordination ceremonies at major temples, see Matsuo 1995, esp. 196–214.

During the hour of the dog (7–9 pm), the meditation nun and her daughter [my wife and daughter] secretly went to Toganoō. At [his monastery] there, the priest Myōe confers the precepts on the fifteenth and last days of each month. It is said that all the ordained and lay under Heaven line up at that place, as if the Buddha were alive in this world. As for me, even though I highly value karmic ties, the thought of massive crowds fills me with discomfort, and [thus] I did not follow [my wife and daughter there]. [Because of the crowding], this poor outcaste [meaning “I”; Teika uses “hinin” here to refer to himself in a self-effacing manner] ultimately missed out on Myōe’s teachings on the precepts.¹²

This passage, which is said to record events of the year 1229, provides several insights. First of all, it suggests that Myōe’s bodhisattva precept ceremonies were understood as possessing some kind of mystical power, and that this power was intimately linked to the perception of Myōe as a charismatic, if not superhuman, figure. Indeed, Teika’s use of simile in describing the popularity of Myōe’s precept ceremonies (“all the ordained and lay under Heaven line up at that place, as if the Buddha were alive in this world”) suggests that Myōe was perceived, at least by some, as a sacred, larger-than-life, figure. Secondly, the passage reveals that even members of the aristocracy — people who regularly commissioned Buddhist monks of Myōe’s stature to come to the court and perform services in the comfort of their personal quarters — were interested in participating in these ceremonies.

Teika’s comments suggest that he was not terribly interested in battling the crowds in the name of Buddhist merit making. But his wife and daughter and, as is suggested later in the passage, other members of the elite, were clearly interested in participating in these rites, despite the fact that their participation would require them to come into contact with hordes of commoners. It is possible that Teika’s wife and daughter simply delighted in the spectacle promised by such events; after all, as ladies well connected in court circles, these women had both the influence and the financial backing necessary to directly commission private rites and services. But Myōe’s willingness to minister to the masses, and his ability to attract large crowds, attracted the fascination of Kamakura courtiers and warrior elites. Indeed, it appears that Myōe’s popularity among the common people was largely proportional to his

¹²⁾ *Meigetsuki* 明月記, Kangi 1.5.15, in Imagawa 1977–79), vol. 5:28–29. I follow Richard Bowring’s interpretation of “hinin” here (Bowring 2005:256).

visibility at court. He was simultaneously involved both in outreach targeted at commoners and in the performance of private services for wealthy courtiers (for patron Imperial Lady Kita-Shirakawa-in, for example, Myōe provided a range of services, from conferring the bodhisattva precepts on her privately to providing her daughter with a talisman meant to protect a romantic relationship). Perhaps it was Myōe's ability to gain attention from those at both extremes of the socio-economic spectrum served to reinforce his popularity with both groups. His immense popularity among common folk convinced the courtiers that he was a charismatic figure deserving of devotion and patronage, and his access to the court and its elite, in turn, undoubtedly increased his reputation among commoners, as it identified him as a master capable of transcending even the most rigid of social boundaries, those of class and rank.

Myōe's popularity as a precepts priest among aristocrats is paralleled in the example of Shunjō 俊苾 (1166–1227), a contemporary of Myōe. A Tendai priest, Shunjō is famed for his twelve-year stay in Song China, where he studied vinaya, Tiantai, and Chan doctrines. Upon his return he introduced new Chinese *vinaya* lineages to Japan and also sought to implement in Japan the monastic lifestyle he had experienced in China. Related, most likely, to this broader commitment to introducing Chinese Buddhist practices to Japan, Shunjō appears to have administered the bodhisattva precepts to laypeople, both commoners and elites, even before Myōe's time. According to the *Sennyūji fukaki hōshiden* 泉涌寺不可棄法師傳, a 1244 biography of Shunjō (also known as the Master Fukaki), Shunjō conferred the bodhisattva precepts upon large groups of commoners as early as the 1190s.¹³ Such large-scale precept-conferral ceremonies do not appear to have been the focus of Shunjō's activities, however, and the degree to which Shunjō's precept-conferral practices overlapped with those of Myōe is not clear. I have not yet found any evidence suggesting that Shunjō held regular precept ceremonies in a fixed location, although it is possible that he may have done so. It was more likely the case, however, that Shunjō, who traveled wide and far through Japan's countryside, sometimes stopped to confer the bodhisattva precepts on locals who believed the ritual to be efficacious.

¹³ *Sennyūji fukaki hōshiden*, in Hanawa 1923–28, vol. 9:45–58. See, for example, p. 46b.

The *Sennyūji fukaki hōshiden*, a detailed biography of Shunjō, includes long narratives describing his activities in China. These portions of the biography suggest that Shunjō did not seclude himself in Chinese monasteries but instead took on the greater social roles of Song-period priests. The biography relates a number of episodes in which Shunjō visits the homes of wealthy elites or officials and offers services for women experiencing difficulty in labor, for the ill, and for the deceased.¹⁴

Shunjō appears to have sought a similar role upon his return from China in 1211. Once settled in Japan, he attracted the patronage of a powerful Bizen warrior named Nakahara Nobufusa, who bequeathed to Shunjō the Kyoto temple Sennyūji. As the recipient of Nobufusa's patronage, Shunjō performed a number of services on behalf of the Nakahara family. Among these services — of course — was the conferral of the bodhisattva precepts.¹⁵

Shunjō's popularity and influence spread, and by the year 1218 he was able to launch a widely successful, large-scale revival of Sennyūji. In 1219 the Retired Emperor Go-Toba became a devotee of Shunjō, providing him with funding generous enough to support substantial construction projects at Sennyūji. As Shunjō's relationship with Go-Toba deepened, he was asked to confer the bodhisattva precepts upon a great number of imperial personages, ranging from Go-Toba himself to Juntoku-in (Go-Toba's son), Go-Takakura-in, and the Imperial Lady Higashi Ichijō-in, Juntoku's consort, among others.¹⁶ Shunjō soon came to be regarded as a figure of divine proportions, a bodhisattva living in the human realm. In fact, when Emperor Shijō (1231–1242) passed away, people began to say that he had been an incarnation of the priest Shunjō.

¹⁴ See, for example, *ibid.* 46b, 48–49, 53, 56.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 53.

¹⁶ Shunjō's disciples further exploited the priest's close ties to the imperial house. His disciple Tankai, in particular, followed in his master's footsteps, spending time in Song China and then returning to Japan with a variety of Buddhist treasures. Among that which he brought back to Japan was a relic of the Buddha's tooth, which he used to attract court patronage. Tankai took the relic to court for a *degaichō* 出開帳. Various imperial personages, including the Retired Emperor and Imperial Ladies, worshiped the relic, and once the relic was installed at Sennyūji, it attracted the pilgrimage of numerous court aristocrats. *Sennyūji fukaki hōshiden*, *ibid.*

While Myōe administered precepts to commoners on a regular basis, Shunjō's conferrals of the bodhisattva precepts appear to have been targeted primarily at elite patrons, although records do suggest that he ordained ordinary laypeople from time to time. Although there is little evidence that Shunjō offered large-scale bodhisattva precept conferrals with the same frequency as Myōe or Eison, his example is illustrative for several reasons. First, the patrons of Shunjō, much like those of Myōe, appear to have found the bodhisattva precept ceremony to be of great appeal. Secondly, Shunjō's case, like those of Myōe and Eison, illustrates how successful movements on the ground eventually caused won charismatic priests attention from courtiers, who desired precept conferrals in return for their patronage.

Although there are no comprehensive studies that consider the growth and spread of large-scale lay precept-conferral ceremonies across sectarian and regional boundaries in Kamakura-period Japan, it is clear that the practice was much larger than the individual movements of Myōe, Shunjō, and Eison. Surviving records suggest that Shōkū 証空 (1177–1247), the priest recognized as the founder of the Seizan sect of Jōdo-shū, for example, was popularizing the bodhisattva precepts among common lay folk when Eison was still in the early years of his ministry. On a name register discovered inside a statue of Amida at Dainenji 大念寺, Shōkū urges sentient beings to take the bodhisattva precepts and says that the precepts, once taken, can never be lost. He also writes that the precepts are the foundation or source of all buddhas (諸仏の本源). This concept — that the realization of buddhahood is based in the precepts — is invoked by Eison as well, as we will see below. Using phrases such as “kainen ittō” 戒念一到 and “kainen ichinyō” 戒念一如, Shōkū's Seizan sect understood the precepts and the *nenbutsu* as one and the same: both give rise to *bodhicitta*, leading to rebirth in the Pure Land and, ultimately, to Buddhahood (Tanabe 2000:99–100). Following this philosophy, Shōkū appears to have offered the bodhisattva precepts to large groups of lay followers. Like Myōe, Shunjō, and Eison, Shōkū also performed private precept conferrals for the elite. In 1243, for example, he administered precepts at the court of the Emperor Go-Saga. Shōkū's Seizan sect continued to emphasize the efficacy of precept conferrals upon the laity and is known for popularizing the practice during the Muromachi period, when Jōdo

sects, Sōtō Zen groups, and vinaya priests, among others, were also performing the rite.

As we have seen, then, large-scale, lay-oriented precept-conferral ceremonies were not unknown in early Japan but appear to have been quite rare through the late Heian and early Kamakura periods. They began to gain visibility in the historical record from the early-to-mid Kamakura period, but even during these years, we find only limited mention of the practice. The practice gained great momentum, however, in the late 1200s, when Eison's Shingon Ritsu movement reached its peak. By the Muromachi period, large-scale precept-conferals aimed at laypeople were performed widely, as numerous sects throughout Japan had incorporated various versions of such rites into their ritual repertoire.

The causes and conditions generating this sudden rise, in late Kamakura Japan, of lay-oriented, precept-conferral ceremonies were surely numerous and complex. One possible factor was increased interest, on the part of Japanese monastics, in how Buddhism was practiced in China, where large-scale ceremonies in which the precepts were administered to laypeople had become ubiquitous by this time. Shunjō, for example, would have witnessed, and likely participated in, such ceremonies during his time in China. Another possible factor is that, domestically, common lay folk had become the primary consumers of *hōe* 法会, or large-scale Buddhist ceremonies. As the power of the court waned, Buddhist institutions, increasingly unable to depend on state patronage, were forced to cater to laypeople, the group that came to supply their most reliable source of income. From the late Heian period onwards, Buddhist ceremonies thus came to incorporate the needs and interests of laypeople.¹⁷ Precept-conferral ceremonies for laypeople, which came to be known as *jukai-e* 受戒会, or “precept-receiving ceremonies,” fit into this broader trend.¹⁸

In China, too, such ceremonies had been popularized as part of a larger effort to better incorporate laypeople into the economic and

¹⁷) For recent work on Buddhist ceremonies in medieval Japan, see Nagamura 2001; Satō 1994; Uejima 2004.

¹⁸) *Jukai-e* can also be written 授戒会, in which case it means “precepts-bestowing ceremony.” Different characters are used depending on the perspective of the subject.

social structures of Buddhist monasteries. As Daniel Getz has explained, Chinese masters produced, from the late Tang through the Song, numerous versions of the bodhisattva precept-conferral rite, each new ceremony “address[ing] in a more focused way the needs and concerns of a lay audience” (Getz 2005:161–62). Tiantai priests successfully popularized these new rites, many gaining fame based on the numbers of precept recipients they attracted. The *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 (T 51, no. 2076) claims that the master Yanshou, for example, attracted some 10,000 devotees to a precept-conferral ceremony atop Mt. Tiantai in the year 974 (Getz 2005:167). Getz’s work analyzes the activities of numerous other Tiantai priests, figures like Zhili, Zunshi, Benru, Huicai, and Yuanzhao, who were all actively involved ceremonies in which they administered the precepts to laypeople *en masse*. As Getz remarks, these figures strove to include as many laypeople as possible in their precept-conferral ceremonies and measured their success according to the size of the crowds they were able to draw (Getz 2005:179).¹⁹

Precept-Conferral Ceremonies in Eison’s Movement

Now that we have sketched the basic contours of the history of large-scale precept-conferral ceremonies for laypeople in China and Japan, let us return to the case of Eison. As has been well documented elsewhere, Eison launched a large-scale revival of the Ritsu, or Vinaya, School from the Nara temple Saidaiji, which he began to restore in the late 1230s. According to the 1290 Saidaiji document *Shien Shōnin donin gyōhō kechige ki* 思円上人度人行法結夏記, Eison administered the bodhisattva precepts to 97,710 individuals (*SEDS*, 212–15). Of these, 96,016 are said to have been householders. Although these numbers may have been inflated by Eison’s disciples, the proportions suggest that his movement, despite its emphasis on the restoration of the monastic order, was primarily focused on the laity: according to Saidaiji’s own documents, a striking 98% of those who received the precepts from Eison were laypeople.

¹⁹⁾ That the bodhisattva precepts became widely popular in China is also supported by Furumatsu Takashi’s recent article (2006). I am grateful to Michael Jamentz for bringing this article to my attention.

Many, if not most, of the precept ceremonies Eison performed were sizeable events in which he ordained a large group of people all at once. Such examples abound in Eison's autobiography, *Kongō Busshi Eison kanjin gakushōki* 金剛仏子叡尊感身学正記 (*KJGSK*). Looking just at the year Kōan 8 (1285), for example, we see that Eison, even at the age of 84, is said to have administered the precepts to large groups in rapid succession. According to this text, he gave the bodhisattva precepts to 730 people at the Gochikō-in of the temple Tennōji on the third day of the fourth month of 1285. Eight days later, the diary claims, he gave the bodhisattva precepts to 629 people in the lecture hall at the Kawachi temple Kyōkōji. Then, on the 26th day of the seventh month, he gave the bodhisattva precepts to 139 people, and on the seventh day of the eighth month, to 2,124 people in the Hyōgo countryside. On the 13th day of that same month, he bestowed the bodhisattva precepts on 972 people at the Hyōgo temple Anyōji. On the same occasion, he is said to have given the (eight) pure precepts to over 1,700 *yūjo*, or “pleasure women” (*injo* 淫女). On the 22nd day of the ninth month, he conferred the bodhisattva precepts on over 700 people at the Seijōkōin, a temple on a *shōen* (landed estate) in Kawachi. He gave another 24 people the bodhisattva precepts on the 19th day of the tenth month. And on the fourth day of the eleventh month, he went to the Yamato temple Daigorinji and bestowed the bodhisattva precepts on over 400 people. Well over 6,718 people, then, are said to have taken some form of the precepts from Eison in the year 1285 alone.²⁰

What was expected of these large groups who took Eison's precepts? Standard readings of Eison have emphasized his concern with the need to observe all of the precepts in detail and with great care. There is a certain tendency, then, to read Eison's *vinaya* revival movement not merely as an attempt to revive the morality of the Buddhist order, but also as an initiative to cultivate lay morality.

Certainly Eison's writings and activities do demonstrate an interest in furthering public morality. Entries from his biographical and sermon collections suggest, for example, that one of the major goals of his

²⁰ *KJGSK*; *SEDS*, 1–76. The first two (of the three) sections also appear in a Hosokawa 1999.

vinaya revival movement was to outlaw the killing of all forms of life, including fish, birds, and wild game. A 1290 biography of Eison (*Shien shōnin donin gyōhō kechige ki*) claims that Eison declared a total of 1,356 villages, estates, and other locales as places prohibiting the slaying of living beings (*sesshō kindan* 殺生禁斷). Eison is also known to have encouraged those working in livelihoods understood as karmically disadvantageous — prostitutes, hunters, fishermen, and the like — to give up their livelihoods and begin observing the lay precepts (Inoue 1971:87–88). He also worked towards such goals as prohibiting liquor.

But while Eison may indeed have understood his movement as contributing to the moral cultivation of the masses, he was also working within a certain set of popular assumptions regarding the ritual power of precepts conferrals. To begin with, precepts conferrals had, throughout East Asia, already been conceptualized as soteriological rites imbued with the power to liberate beings from their karmic fates. Daoxuan's *Xu gaoseng zhuan* (*Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks*), for example, is replete with stories of priests using precepts bestowal ceremonies to free various beings, including menacing spirits, local deities, and animals, from their karmic destinies (Shinohara 1994:81–90). In these stories, that which is highlighted is not the moral commitments of those receiving the precepts. Instead, the stories are reflective of the spiritual power of the priest who administers the precepts, and of the power embodied in, and transmitted through, the ritual itself. By Eison's time, the notion that precept conferral was a mysterious rite of unfathomable merit — an idea that we can trace back to texts like the *Xianyu jing* and the *Foshuo chujia gongde jing* — was a deeply entrenched one.

So while it would be presumptuous to say that precepts conferrals given to lay groups did not seek to encourage moral cultivation, we cannot assume that the efficacy of the precepts ceremony was understood as dependent upon one's success in (or even concern with) upholding those precepts received. A 1414 copy of the Saidaiji ritual guide *Jubosatsukai yōi monsho* 受菩薩戒用意聞書, which explains the ritual procedures for conferring the bodhisattva precepts, supports this view. The manual states, rather matter-of-factly, that since the laypeople living at the temple (a group to be described in greater depth below) who take the bodhisattva precepts are basically just given a *kaimyō* 戒名, or a Buddhist name, in order to create karmic bonds (結緣

kechien), the precepts priest need not give them a careful explanation of the precepts. Minowa Kenryō has read this remark as evidence that Eison and his disciples did not expect laity receiving the precepts to actually uphold them.²¹

The Spiritual Efficacy of Eison's Precept Conferrals

Before Eison's movement caught the attention of elites, he and his disciples spent much of their time traveling throughout the countryside regions of the Kinai, soliciting people of all backgrounds to contribute to their campaign to restore the precepts and to rebuild temples left devastated through warfare or neglect. They had no strong financial base but instead depended on the accumulation of many small contributions. And although Eison and his disciples would eventually attract the patronage of the wealthy, their primary benefactors, especially in the early years of their movement, were common lay folk who could afford to make only humble donations. While Eison and his disciples offered a great number of services aimed at helping²² — or attracting (depending on one's view, of course) — common laypeople, two services, in particular, sealed their success in the countryside. The first was the *Kōmyō Shingon*, or Mantra of Light, ritual, which allowed participants to transfer merit to deceased loved ones. Eison's group used this ritual to perform funerary rites in the countryside. Commoners would contribute funds not only for funerary rites as such, but also for memorial rites, also using the *Kōmyō Shingon*, that commemorated the dead annually or at other marked intervals. The second service offered by Saidaiji Vinaya priests that gained particular popularity among the laity was the precept-conferral ceremony (Ōishi 2001:44).

One of the great draws of Eison's movement was that he and his disciples regularly gave ordinary laypeople the chance to receive the

²¹) Scholars believe that this manual was first written in 1290, right around the time of Eison's death. According to Minowa, the manual appears to reflect the procedures used by Eison himself in conferrals of the bodhisattva precepts (Minowa 1999:65–66). Cf. Minowa 1996a:66.

²²) Janet Goodwin discusses the fundraising efforts of Eison and his disciples in Goodwin 1994, esp. 117–27.

precepts — the bodhisattva precepts of the *Fanwang jing*, as well as those precepts from the *vinaya* that targeted lay followers: the eight pure precepts, and the five lay precepts. Receiving the precepts, as we have seen, was understood as an act of immeasurably positive karmic consequence. Indeed, Eison goes so far as to argue that the ritual conferment of the five lay precepts or the ten major bodhisattva precepts essentially guarantees one's salvation. Responding to debates concerning the relative efficacy of various precept conferrals, he says in one of his sermons,

What people of the world say — that taking the five precepts leads to rebirth as a human being and that taking the ten leads to rebirth in a heavenly realm — is nonsense.... Whether it be the bodhisattva precepts, the five [lay precepts], the eight [pure precepts], the ten precepts, or the complete precepts, all are causes of Buddhahood. (Watt 1999:96; translation altered slightly).

In addition to the long-term goal of Buddhahood, these precept conferrals were also associated with more mundane goals, with what has often been termed *genze riyaku*, or worldly benefits. Throughout the Heian period, as previously mentioned, the *jukai* had been practiced with a variety of practical goals in mind, such as extending one's lifespan, healing an illness, securing safe childbirth, and the like. It is likely that many of those who participated in Eison's mass ceremonies would have considered the ceremonies an opportunity to acquire such worldly benefits. Certainly the fact that Eison administered the precepts to the sick, especially to those afflicted with leprosy, suggests that healing powers were attributed to the precept-conferment ritual (Minowa 1999:450).

Another point worth emphasizing is that many people took the precepts — even the same sets of precepts — from Eison on multiple occasions; numerous documents associated with Eison's movement, including the record of his trip to the Kantō region in 1262 (*Kantō ōkanki* 関東往還記) and his autobiography (*KJGSK*), attest that this was the case. The record of his trip to the Kantō indicates that a number of Bakufu elites (primarily members of the Hōjō) took the precepts from him multiple times within a period of several months (*Kantō ōkanki*; *SEDS*, 67–91). Similarly, his autobiography shows that at least a handful of elite court figures received the precepts from him multiple

times. As Ōishi Masaaki has pointed out, Eison often used the bodhisattva precepts simply as a means of giving laypeople the opportunity to accrue good karma (Ōishi 2001:44). It appears to have been widely assumed that the precept-conferral ceremony, like other merit-making activities, was most effective when repeated again and again; according to the logic of merit making, each repetition of a meritorious act would contribute to the karmic reserves of the individual in question.

The Rewards of Bestowing Merit

What did Eison and his movement gain in offering commoners formal conferrals of the precepts? As suggested earlier, these ceremonies must first be understood within the greater context of fundraising. It was likely the opportunity to participate in Eison's bodhisattva precept and other ceremonies that motivated many of his lay donors to contribute small landholdings and other financial resources to the Eison's movement. Related to this goal of raising funds was another crucial objective: expansion into the countryside.

Saidaiji's years of rapid expansion into the countryside appear to have begun just a few years before Eison's death. Over the next century, the Saidaiji network expanded far and wide: the 1391 document *Saidaiji shokoku matsuji chō* (*Register of Saidaiji Branch Temples in All Provinces*) claims over 250 temples, stretching from Dewa in the north to Satsuma and Ōsumi in the south, as Saidaiji branch temples (Ōishi 2001:42). Although many of the temples absorbed into the Saidaiji network appear to have been voluntarily handed over, from their rightful administrators, to Saidaiji priests, other temples, especially those in more remote areas, were likely "converted" to the Saidaiji vinaya movement in a more coercive manner.

In converting local temples, Saidaiji would first install a Saidaiji priest as abbot, then raise funds for temple repairs, and finally perform rituals to gain local support (and one of the most important rituals used to gain local support would have been bodhisattva precept and other precept-conferral ceremonies) (Sawa 1990). To give an example of how local support might be generated, consider the case of the Saidaiji branch temple Sairinji: Although the administration rights (*bettō shiki*) to the Kawachi temple Sairinji appear to have been handed over to

Eison's nephew and disciple Sōji (1233–1312) voluntarily, Sōji was likely concerned over the degree to which locals would be supportive of the temple's new association with Saidaiji. Once he arrived at the post, he immediately invited Eison to come and confer the bodhisattva precepts to 256 locals, undoubtedly in an attempt to win local support for the temple's new Saidaiji-led administration (Hosokawa 1987:85–86).

Saidaiji's precept-conferral ceremonies can also be understood, then, within the larger framework of “conversion” narratives used to explain expansion into regional areas with strong, often non-Buddhist, local traditions of their own. In his studies of 14th and 15th century Sōtō Zen expansion into the countryside, William Bodiford has highlighted the important role that precept ceremonies played in the “conversion” of local spirits and communities. During the 15th century, Sōtō Zen priests sponsored various mass precept ceremonies in rural society, offering participants the promise of salvation while simultaneously garnering support for the school's own expansion into the countryside and, more specifically, for its conversion of village temples into Sōtō institutions. Saidaiji's precept-conferral ceremonies represent, it would seem, a kind of precedent for these later Sōtō practices. (Bodiford also speculates that the Sōtō priests who ordained large groups most likely did not expect people to actually uphold the precepts) (Bodiford 1993:163–84).

On the one hand, large-scale precept-conferral ceremonies garnered on-the-ground political and financial support for the Saidaiji network as it expanded in the Kinai countryside. On the other, the ceremonies drew attention from elite groups. In addition to the layfolk in the Kinai who sought precepts from Eison, courtiers, royalty, and members of the warrior nobility — folks from the Kyoto and Kamakura capitals — also begged Eison to confer precepts upon them.

Although Eison's autobiography and biographies do not indicate that he visited imperial residences or had any regular contact with high-ranking figures during the first twenty or more years of his career, they describe frequent interaction with elite society from the late 1260s on. For example, Eison's autobiography indicates that he gave the precepts to the daughter of Konoe no Motomichi 近衛基道, a member of the northern branch of the Fujiwara clan, in the year 1269. At the time that this highborn woman took the bodhisattva precepts, nineteen others

joined her. Eison says that he received, as his payment, a grain of the Tōshōdaiji relics during this encounter (*KJGSK*, Bun'ei 6).²³

A couple of weeks later, Eison was invited to the residence of the Kanpaku Regent Takatsukasa Mototada 鷹司基忠. There he gave the bodhisattva precepts to forty people (*KJGSK*, Bun'ei 6). Less than a week after this large event, Eison visited the residence of the wife of Bakufu official Rokuhara-den (Hōjō Tokishige; 1241–1270). There, Tokishige's wife, along with twenty-four others, is said to have taken the bodhisattva precepts from Eison (*ibid.*).

In the year 1276, at age of seventy-six, Eison was given an imperial order to visit the Daitashōin 大多勝院 in Saga (one of the Retired Emperor's residences), where he gave the bodhisattva precepts to the Retired Emperor Kameyama (1249–1305; r. 1259–74), his two Imperial Ladies (*nyōin*), and one lady-in-waiting (*nyōbō*). (Eison notes here that the Retired Emperor took only nine of the ten major precepts, having excluded the precept against illicit sexual relations from his vows. This is an interesting detail, in that it suggests there was still some degree concern over whether or not one could actually observe the vows he/she was taking. Certainly Eison himself argued that people should not take the precepts until they had given rise to the mind of enlightenment and intended to observe the precepts, but of course it is impossible to know if people followed his advice [*KJGSK*; *SEDS*, 43]).

In 1278, Eison gave the bodhisattva precepts to the Retired Emperor and some sixty aristocrats. In 1279, he was invited to the residences of the Retired Emperors again. He gave the bodhisattva precepts to Retired Emperor Go-Fukakusa and one of his consorts, and to Kameyama again. In addition, nearly sixty officials of the court took the precepts from him. In return, the Retired Emperor ordered that a complete set of the Buddhist sutras (*issaikyō*) be given to Eison. That same year, Eison also gave the bodhisattva precepts to the Imperial Lady Muromachi (1228–1300), who rewarded him with a number of Buddha Tooth Relic grains. The following year, Eison gave the bodhisattva precepts to

²³) The text refers to the “shōdai” relics, most likely referring to relics that had been installed at the temple Tōshōdaiji. Some of the relics linked to Tōshōdaiji are mentioned by Ruppert 2000:61, 180, 194, 216.

Kameyama's new Imperial Lady, Shinyōmeimon'in (1262–1296), who was 18 years old at the time.²⁴

A year later, in 1281, Eison was invited to Daitashōin Residence again, where he gave the *hassaikai* (eight pure precepts) to the Retired Emperor and one Imperial Lady (*KJGSK*; *SEDS*, 51). He is also said to have given the bodhisattva precepts to the Emperor Go-Uda during the same month, and to have given the *saikai* (pure precepts) to the emperor's consort. In 1282, he conferred the bodhisattva precepts on an imperial princess (*Saidai chokushi kōshō bosatsu gyōjitsu nenpu*; *SEDS*, 177, 179). In the third month of 1284, Eison gave the bodhisattva precepts to five ladies-in-waiting, the Retired Emperor, and seventy people below him. A couple of weeks later, Eison bestowed the bodhisattva precepts on the Retired Emperor, one of his Imperial Ladies, and seventy others. Soon after, Eison returned to the inner palace, this time bestowing the bodhisattva precepts on everyone from the emperor to various ladies-in-waiting, including a total of some forty-six court figures (*KJGSK*; *SEDS*, 56). And the ceremonies continued.

Eison, whose movement first focused on common lay folk, spent his final years in diverse company. Though his own writings speak of distaste for fame and fortune, the elite eventually demanded his ritual services, and he obliged. By agreeing to perform rituals for imperial family members, courtiers, and elite warriors, Eison was able to win the support of those in power, those who would, following Eison's death, enable his movement to expand even further.

Saidaiji Precept-Conferral Liturgies

One of the innovations of Eison's precept-conferral ceremonies was their flexibility: these rituals could take place at any time, in any location, and on any scale. Although Tendai priests had long offered elites the chance to undergo precept-conferral ceremonies in the privacy of their own residences and at times convenient for them, it appears that most ceremonies for the masses had taken place at fixed locations and

²⁴) See *KJGSK*; *SEDS*, 45–48; and the *Saidai chokushi kōshōbosatsu gyōjitsu nenpu*; *SEDS*, 169–72.

times (as in the case of Hasedera, for example). But Eison and his disciples bestowed the precepts in various places, as they were traveling through the countryside. Precepts could be administered for a single individual (a practice especially common in the case of elite patrons), or they could be bestowed upon a group large or small. As Eison notes in one of his sermons,

Generally, the precepts for lay believers are comprised of the receiving of the Three Refuges [Refuge in the Buddha, Refuge in the Dharma, and Refuge in the Sangha] and the Five Precepts [do not kill, do not engage in sexually impure behavior, do not misuse language, and do not drink alcohol] from a precepts master. As for the precepts master, so long as he is a *biku* 比丘 [full-fledged monk], anyone will do. As a rule, there is only a single precepts master [in a given ceremony]. (Quoted in Minowa 1996a:71)

That precept-conferral ceremonies could be easily adapted to different situations is also suggested in an early section of the *Jubosatsukai yōi monsho* titled “On the Recipients” (受者の事): “As for those who are receiving the precepts for *kechien* 結縁, they may be one or many, receiving all precepts or partial, male or female, high-born or low-born: there are no rules regarding these things” (Minowa 1996a:61b).

Though versatile, the precept ceremonies offered by Eison’s group were far from simple. Granted, they were not as lengthy as the traditional ordination ceremonies that took place on fixed dates at places like Tōdaiji (these rituals typically lasted for three days). But Vinaya school precept-conferral ceremonies did employ a detailed liturgy. According to Minowa, who has carefully analyzed surviving Saidaiji precept-conferral manuals, the basic liturgical structure used to confer the ten major bodhisattva precepts upon a layperson or group of laypeople looked something like this:

First the Recipient(s) (*jusha* 受者) and Witnesses (*shōmei* 證明) all take their seats

The Precepts Master (戒師 *kaishi*) enters, performs the Sanrai 三礼 (Three Respects),²⁵ and takes his seat

²⁵) A chant in which three beings or concepts are recognized and honored.

The Precepts Master performs the *ānāpāna-smṛti* 阿那波那念 (breath-counting meditation)²⁶

The Precepts Master gives the *hyōbyaku* 表白 (Opening)

Sanki 三帰 (Three Refuges)

Hosshin 発心 (Arousal of the Aspiration for Enlightenment)

Invitation to the Masters Before Us 請現前師²⁷

Invitation to the Mysterious Five Masters 請冥五師²⁸

Zange (Repentance) 懺悔²⁹

Explanation of *hosshin* (Arousal of the Aspiration for Enlightenment)
問発心

Konma 羯磨 (Ritual Procedures)³⁰

Second Konma

Third Konma

²⁶ According to Minowa, the *ānāpāna-smṛti*, or breath-counting meditation, was not included in Tendai precept-conferral manuals. This unusual element likely points to the influence of Zen thought and practice within medieval Nara circles (Minowa 1996a:62b).

²⁷ I.e., to those masters participating in the present ceremony.

²⁸ In this instance the Five Mysterious Masters refer to Śākyamuni (as the *wajō* 和尚); the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī (as the bodhisattva precepts *ajari*); the Buddha Maitreya (as the instructional preceptor, *jiaoshou shi* 教授師); the Buddhas of the Ten Directions (as the Witnesses 証戒尊師); and all bodhisattvas (as Dharma Companions 同法侶). This step was based on the Tendai bodhisattva ordination manual 授菩薩戒法. (See Minowa 1996a:83b).

²⁹ In Japanese Buddhist liturgies, “Zange” typically refers to the chanting of the “zange verse” (*zange mon* 懺悔文), a line found in the *Huayan jing* 華嚴經 (T. no. 293, Skt. Avatamsaka-sūtra) Chapter on the Vows of Samantabhadra 普賢行願品:

我昔所造諸惡業
皆由無始貪瞋痴
從身語意之所生
一切我今皆懺悔 (T. no. 293, 847a16–17)

The evil karma I created in the past
All came from desire, hatred, and ignorance, which are without beginning,
And were born of [my] body, speech, and mind.
For all [my evil deeds] I now repent.

³⁰ “Konma” is a transliteration of *karma*; as such, it means “deed” or “action.” In this particular usage it refers to ritual procedures standardized within *vinaya* lineages (entry for “羯磨,” *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*).

Precepts Master questions the Witnesses
 Precepts Master performs the Sesshō 説相 (Explanation of the Precepts)
 Precepts Master burns incense
 Recipients perform Sanrai
 [Recipients] withdraw
 Precepts Master and order of priests perform Sanrai and withdraw
 [Group] Exits hall (Minowa 1996a:71)

Most of these steps represent *shōmyō* 声明 (Chns. *shengming*), or Buddhist liturgical chants, that would have been intoned aloud according to set pitches and rhythms. While the use of chant in Buddhist ritual can be traced back to India and China, the Japanese case was particular insofar as it combined a range of different genres and languages. Some *shōmyō* were based on Sanskrit and Chinese language texts and were chanted with the aid of pronunciation glosses that provided transliterations; others, especially those that had been composed in Japanese, were chanted in a more vernacular form. Most *shōmyō* focused on passages from sutras, but some were comprised of hymns written in Sanskrit, Chinese, or Japanese.³¹

While the content of the *hyōbyaku* would be altered in order to accommodate the particular occasion at hand, the other *shōmyō* listed here most likely employed fixed verses that had been used in Buddhist ceremonies for centuries. The actual conferring of the precepts begins in the Konma section. Saidaiji precept-conferral manuals include the liturgy for this section, which begins with the precepts priest and the witnesses putting their hands in *gasshō* 合掌. The manual then instructs the precepts priest to address the recipients, using their names if the group is small enough, and referring to them as “good sons and good daughters” 善男子, 善女人. From there, the priest was to intone a long text, taken mostly from the *pusadi jiepin* 菩薩地戒品 section of the *Yuqie(shidi)lun* 瑜伽(師地)論 (*Yogācāra-bhūmi*, Jpns. *Yuga(shiji)ron*, T. 30, no. 1579). These lines praise the three pure precepts as that which the bodhisattvas of the past, present, and future are always studying and embodying. The recipients are told that they must resolve to uphold

³¹⁾ For a more comprehensive introduction to Japanese Buddhist chant, see Hill 1982:27–39.

these precepts always and are then asked if they can do so. The entire Konma section is then to be repeated two additional times, thereby enabling the recipients to become familiar with the content of the precepts they are taking (Minowa 1996a:71–72).

During the Sesshō, the ten major bodhisattva precepts were to be read aloud, one by one. Minowa has pointed out that the actual phrasing of the ten major bodhisattva precepts employed in Saidaiji manuals follows the terminology found in the Silla master Taehyōn's 太賢 *Fanwang jing* commentary *Pōmmanggyōng gojōkki* 梵網經古跡記 (T. 40, no. 1815). Having chanted aloud the ten bodhisattva precepts, the precepts priest is to read aloud a few summary remarks, reminding recipients that they are to honor these vows forever (Minowa 1996a:72).

As Minowa's research has clarified, this Saidaiji liturgy combined terms, ideas, and rites taken from a number of different sources, including Tendai liturgical manuals, Silla commentaries, Xuanzang's 玄奘 translation of the *Apidamo jushe lun* 阿毘達磨俱舍論 (T. 29, no. 1558), the writings of the Nanshan Vinaya school's 南山律宗 Yuanzhao, and, of course, the *Brahmā Net Sūtra* and the *Yuqie lun* (Minowa 1996b). Eison's piecing together of diverse interpretations of the precepts and their conferrals meant that his ceremonies combined the familiar with the unfamiliar.

More complex than any single liturgy itself was the relationship between the various forms of precept conferral offered and the divisions within Eison's order. Eison's movement employed a multi-tiered system of administering the precepts. The first division was twofold: followers could receive both the *tsūju* 通受, or comprehensive conferral, and a *betsuju* 別受, or separate conferral. As a general rule, comprehensive conferrals included both traditional *vinaya* precepts (largely relying on the *Sifen lü*) and bodhisattva precepts (taken from the *Fanwang jing* and the *Yuqie lun*), while separate conferrals included only the former.³² The Saidaiji manual *Jubosatsukai sahō* 授菩薩戒作法 explains the system as follows:

As for the World-Honored One's most cherished wish upon emerging in this world, it is nothing other than these precepts. As it is said, even though sentient beings possess the Buddha-nature, due to false discrimination, they do not mani-

³²) Minowa 1999:xiv–xv, 316–30, 372–81. These texts are mentioned in the first note of the Introduction.

fest it. The first step in manifesting the Buddha-nature, then, is to uphold the precepts. In receiving these precepts, there are two methods. These are the *tsūju* and the *betsuju*. As for the *betsuju*, the procedures for those [precepts] upheld by each of the seven groups (七衆) are different. As for the *tsūju*, [everyone] takes the same three sets of pure precepts (三聚). Then they advance from the coarse to the fine, from the ten major precepts for *kechien* to the great *bhikṣu* precepts 大苾芻戒 (*dai bishu kai*).

In other words, everyone in Eison's order — from the full-fledged *biku* down to the common lay believer — was to receive the same comprehensive conferral of the bodhisattva precepts. One's place within the order, then, was determined according to the *betsuju*, or separate conferral, that one received. As suggested above, one could progress through many levels of separate conferral over time.

In the excerpt above, the Eison's Vinaya order is described as having seven *shū* 衆, or groups. But as Minowa has illustrated, close attention to Saidaiji documents reveals that Eison's order was actually divided into nine groups (or eleven, if the last two lay groups are further divided by sex). Each group was distinguished by the *betsuju* its members had received:

1. Full-Fledged Monk (*biku* 比丘, also *daisō* 大僧 and *bishu* 苾芻)
2. Full-Fledged Nun (*bikuni* 比丘尼, also *daini* 大尼 and *bishuni* 苾芻尼)
3. Probationary Nuns (*shikishamana* 式叉摩那)
- Novice Monks (*shami* 沙彌)
4. Novice in "Outer Form" (*gyōdō* 形同 type)
5. Novice in Accordance with the Dharma (*hōdō* 法同 type, also *gonsaku* 勤策)
- Novice Nuns (*shamini* 沙彌尼)
6. Novice in "Outer Form" (*gyōdō* 形同 type)
7. Novice in Accordance with the Dharma (*hōdō* 法同 type, also *gonsakunyo* 勤策女)
8. Resident Lay Devotees (*gonjū* 近住, male and female)
9. [Ordinary] Lay Devotees (*gonsbi* 近士, also *gonji* 近事, male and female)

The traditional sevenfold division of the *sangha* includes full-fledged monks and nuns, probationary nuns, novice monks and nuns, laywomen

and laymen. Eison introduced new groups into his order by dividing the rank of novice into the categories of *gyōdō* and *hōdō* and the rank of layperson into *gonshi* and *gonjū*. While these classifications were based on passages from Chinese *vinaya* texts, especially those of Daoxuan, Yuanzhao, and Xuanzang, Eison appears to have been the first to use these particular classifications to create actual groups within the order.³³ These new groups are of particular interest insofar as they provided a number of intermediary options for those who sought affiliation with Eison's group (and with the merit of home-leaving) but who were unable, for whatever reason, to embark upon the path of full renunciation.

For laypeople, many options were available. First, one could simply take the ten major bodhisattva precepts in order to form *kechien* with Eison's group. This conferral could be accomplished rather easily: one needed only to participate in one of the large-scale bodhisattva precept-conferral ceremonies offered by the Saidaiji order. These ceremonies took place frequently and followed the liturgical format outlined above. For one who simply wished to create some merit and to form a bond with Eison's movement, participation in this one ceremony would suffice.

Laypeople who wanted to create even more merit, and to establish a more lasting bond with Eison's movement, could take, in addition to the bodhisattva precepts, the five traditional lay precepts.³⁴ This step would mark them as *gonshi*. *Gonshi* were laypeople; they did not shave their heads, nor did they live on the grounds of the temple. Although surviving sources do not allow us to determine the situation with any certainty, it seems that, in taking an extra set of precepts from Eison's group, *gonshi* established a bond with Eison's group that exceeded that created by those who simply participated in mass bodhisattva precept-conferral ceremonies. That *gonshi* created a more enduring bond with Eison's group is suggested by the existence of *kōmyō* 交名, or name registers, listing the names of *gonshi* who had taken the bodhisattva precepts from Eison.³⁵ This evidence suggests that *gonshi* were given *kaimyō*, or

³³) Minowa 1996b, esp. 78–81. Daoxuan's *Jiemoshu* 羯磨疏, for example, uses much of the language that Eison invokes (*gyōdō shami*, *hōdō shami*). See Minowa 1999:321.

³⁴) The five precepts for the laity are the first five of the ten novice precepts: no killing, no stealing, no inappropriate sexual behavior, no lying, and no drinking of alcohol.

³⁵) See *Jubosatsukai deshi kōmyō* 授菩薩戒弟子交名; SEDS, 372–79; *Gonjū nannyo kōmyō* 近住男女交名, SEDS, 379–83; and Matsuo 1996.

Buddhist names, and that they were given the opportunity to sign name registers that sealed their affiliation with the Saidaiji movement. Although we cannot be sure that ordinary participants in large-scale bodhisattva precept ceremonies were not bestowed with *kaimyō* or given the opportunity to have their name recorded in *kōmyō*, Minowa suggests that, given the sheer volume of people who participated in the large ceremonies, it is unlikely that Saidaiji priests would have had the time to record so many names. Moreover, he adds, paper was extremely valuable during this period, and most of the common folk participating in mass precept ceremonies would not have been able to read, anyway.³⁶

Above the *gonshi*, the rank of *gonjū* represents a higher level of lay commitment. *Gonjū* took the five traditional *vinaya* precepts for the laity and the eight pure precepts (*hassaikai* 八齋戒).³⁷ Although local lay groups in India had only been expected to observe the eight pure precepts six days per month, the *gonjū* in Eison's order were told to uphold these precepts for life. Those who observed these eight pure precepts indefinitely constituted a group known as the *saikaishū* 齋戒衆 (Minowa 1999:316–30; xiv–xv). While the *gonjū*, or members of the *saikaishū*, did not shave their heads, they did leave their secular lives behind insofar as they took up residence on the grounds of Saidaiji-branch Vinaya temples (Minowa 1996b:90). Particularly telling here is the fact that Saidaiji liturgical manuals often refer to members of the *saikaishū* as *shukke no gonjū* 出家の近住, indicating that these recipients, though they had not received the precepts of a novice, monk, or nun, were still deemed *shukke*, or home-leavers (Minowa 1996a:65).

Yet another option for laypeople was monastic novice-hood. Eison divided novices into the categories of *gyōdō shāmini* (novice in outer form only) and *hōdō shāmini* (novice in accordance with proper method). *Gyōdō shāmini* and *shāmini* looked like *shukke* insofar as they shaved their heads, but they received only the ten major bodhisattva precepts (*jūjūkai* 十重戒). A *gyōdō shāmini* or *shāmini* could stop at this rank or could progress to full novice-hood, a path that could eventually lead to ordination as a fully-fledged monk or nun. To advance as

³⁶ Personal e-mail communication with Minowa, December 15, 2006.

³⁷ Minowa 1999:316–30. The *hassaikai* include the five lay precepts, plus no adorning the body, listening to music, or dancing; no sleeping on a high, wide bed; and no eating at forbidden times.

full-fledged novices, or *hōdō shamilshamini*, *gyōdō shamilshamini* were required to take the ten precepts for novices (*jūkai* 十戒).³⁸ Once this step was complete, the recipients would be considered *shukke* rather than lay believers (Minowa 1999:316–30; xiv–xv).

Attention to surviving Saidaiji liturgical manuals has enabled us both to gain a sense of what the basic liturgical content of Eison's bodhisattva precept-conferral ceremonies was like and to understand how the different precepts Eison offered corresponded to ranks within his order. From the liturgical structure of Eison's precept-conferral ceremonies, we can see that his large-scale ceremonies allowed devotees to participate in an elaborate ritual performance. Devotees must have found the performance of the bodhisattva precept ceremony stimulating both visually and aurally. In rural areas where common folk had had little exposure to Buddhist ceremony on such a grand level, these rituals surely must have provided a delightful spectacle. While the opportunity to create karmic merit surely attracted many to Eison's precept conferrals, one can imagine that, in particularly remote rural areas, anyway, the mere pageantry associated with such a ceremony would have drawn large crowds.

For those who wanted further association with Eison's vinaya revival movement, participation in additional precept-conferral ceremonies enabled locals to join various groups within the order. In particular, Eison introduced several new categories that blended the basic characteristics of lay status with those of monastic status. The *gyōdō shamini*, for example, shaved their heads like full novices but were considered laypeople until they took the ten novice precepts, and the *gonjū* kept their hair but took up residence within the temple complex, meaning that they had, in many ways, given up their secular lives. In adding these new categories of belonging, Eison expanded the scope of his order. Not only did these new categories blur the line between the laity and the monastic order, creating a spectrum of possible positionalities between layperson and monastic, but they also enabled the Saidaiji movement to absorb new members both quickly and from a range of backgrounds.

³⁸) The five layperson's precepts, plus not eating during forbidden times; not adorning the body; not partaking in song and dance; not sleeping on a high, wide bed; and not possessing valuables.

Divisions Within the Order

That Eison bestowed precepts upon such a large and varied group of people might lead one to assume that his movement had a grassroots flavor. In the sense that he and his disciples interacted with common folk, with women, and with the diseased, this assumption might not be altogether incorrect. But it would be wrong to assume that his movement was nonhierarchical; as Hosokawa Ryōichi has demonstrated, the Saidaiji-branch Vinaya order was organized according to a complex hierarchy that tended to reify distinctions such as social class and gender. Against the notion that the *saikaishū* was a benign designation for committed laypeople, for example, Hosokawa reveals that this group was an underclass consisting of laypeople interested in full world renunciation but prohibited, likely on the base of class, from pursuing that goal. These men, he argues, faced numerous forms of discrimination. Unlike full Vinaya priests, for example, *saikaishū* members were not allowed to bathe at the local Hokkeji bath. Moreover, members of the *saikaishū* assembly were given the task of handling corpses when the Vinaya movement began to perform great numbers of funerals on behalf of its supporters and patrons. Unlike full *biku*, who handled *kuyō* 供養 commemorative services, as well as the other aspects of funerary procedures considered to be non-defiling, the *saikaishū* was responsible for “polluting” duties such as guarding the graves (*hakamori*) (Hosokawa 1987:11–24).

Hosokawa’s argument in the case of the *saikaishū* is illuminating because it illustrates the degree to which one’s access to certain precepts was bound up with one’s social status. Hosokawa shows that in the case of Tōshōdaiji, another Vinaya temple in Nara, many members of the *saikaishū* were local villagers (*muramin*). While these men were granted a place in the temple community, they were not given the opportunity to advance through the same hierarchies. In the case of Saidaiji, the *saikaishū* likely consisted of farmers (Minowa 1999:338). This group was likely responsible for carrying out much of the “dirty work” that higher-ranking Saidaiji priests presumably wanted to avoid (Hosokawa 1987:11–24). In fact, some scholars have suggested that one’s access to various conferral rites was largely determined by one’s social class (see, for example, Ōishi 1997:187). Ordination as a full monastic may have been limited to the elite; namely, to those who were educated and who

had ties to the capital or to Kamakura. People who had grown up in the countryside but who had had access to education and who had some connection to the capital likely would have had the opportunity to advance from *gyōdō shami/shamini* to *hōdō shami/shamini* and perhaps even to full monk or nun-hood. But locals without impressive ties — farmers, low-level warriors, and local landholders — appear to have been barred, though unofficially, from attaining high ranks within the order. Farmers, who represented the lowest level of social class and education, were most likely restricted to the *saikaishū*. Those of a slightly higher status may have been given the opportunity to become *gyōdō shami/shamini* but were restricted from advancing to the status of *hōdō shami/shamini*.

Nevertheless, prospective members of Eison's movement appear not to have been discouraged by the fact that their social class would largely determine their opportunities within the order. Rigid social distinctions were, after all, such an entrenched part of medieval Japanese society that we can hardly expect would-be Vinaya-school precept recipients to have doubted the validity of class-based discrimination. Farmers who joined the *vinaya* revival movement as members of the *saikaishū* must have found the opportunity appealing on several fronts, despite the fact that it involved work with the dead. Membership in the group would have enabled them to build great stores of karmic merit, to live on temple grounds as a part of a learned community with ties to the capital, to have access to powerful ritual performances on a regular basis, and to interact with men and women deemed holy. The opportunity to participate in this rich culture, in however limited a way, surely outweighed any disadvantages associated with handling corpses.

The Big Picture: Precept Conferral, Merit, and Eison's New Model of Lay-Monastic Relations

Precept-conferral ceremonies in China and Japan, and especially the bodhisattva precepts ceremony, built on the notion that the conferral of the precepts produced mystical and immeasurable merit similar to that created by those who made the decision to leave home. Texts such as the *Xianyu jing* and the *Foshuo chujia gongde jing* explicitly state that the merit of leaving home far exceeds the merit of all other Buddhist activities.

Mass bodhisattva precept ceremonies enabled great numbers of laypeople both to access vast merit and to allay fears associated with death by participating in ceremonies that simulated those undertaken by home leavers.

As we have seen, mass precept-conferral ceremonies did not become common in Japan until the late Heian and early Kamakura periods, when priests like Shunjō, Myōe, and Shōkū began to administer precepts to large groups of laypeople. Eison's use of the precept-conferral ceremony introduced many innovations, innovations that undoubtedly played key roles in the overwhelming growth of his movement. First of all, as mentioned before, Eison and his disciples performed precept-conferral ceremonies constantly and in a wide variety of locations. Unlike earlier Japanese priests, who tended to administer the precepts on a less frequent basis, typically at fixed locations and times, Eison and his disciples made the bestowal of precepts upon laypeople a central focus of their movement, performing conferrals unceasingly and in often in remote or unorthodox locations. Secondly, Eison used precept-conferral ceremonies in a more complex fashion. While earlier priests had administered the precepts to laypeople primarily as a means of granting devotees the opportunity to create some merit for themselves, Eison's ordinations added to this long-accepted view of the conferral upon laypeople a second meaning: his conferrals could also be used to bestow specific ranks and roles upon those receiving the precepts. While some of Eison's recipients did opt to take only the bodhisattva precepts so they could store up merit for themselves, others wanted to go a step further, to place themselves even closer to the ideal of leaving home. Eison's group made *betsuju* conferrals available to those who wanted to take this extra step. These devotees thus had the opportunity to establish a more enduring bond with the monastic community and, of course, to create even greater merit.

In a sense, Eison's decision to expand the order by creating new categories of membership is suggestive of inclusiveness found in the *Xianyu jing*. When the 100 year-old Sirī-vaddhi travels to the Bamboo Grove and announces his desire to leave home, he is first dismissed as an inappropriate candidate for tonsure. But when the Buddha appears, he immediately grants Sirī-vaddhi's wish. No one, however unsuitable for monastic life he or she may appear to be, is to be denied the merit of leaving home.

Surely most Buddhist priests living in Japan would have considered unlettered farmers to be the most unlikely candidates for ordination. In finding a way to include uneducated laypeople into his order, Eison made the merit of receiving the precepts, which was conceptually related to the merit of leaving home, available to a diverse group. An optimistic reading might suggest that Eison was attempting to approximate the spirit of inclusiveness conveyed in the Buddha's response to Sirī-vaddhi. An important distinction puts all comparison to rest, however. If one were to consider the situation crudely, as Śāriputra did, the Buddha's order had little to gain from the inclusion of a 100-year-old man who would likely become ill, require medical treatment, pass away, and then require memorial services all before he had made any contribution to the order. Eison's group, by contrast, had everything to gain from the inclusion of local farmers. In creating the *saikaishū*, Eison created a devoted workforce that enabled his movement to grow. Yes, local farmers and other commoners who would have otherwise had few opportunities to participate in the practice of home-leaving were given a chance to join the Saidaiji community and to access the merit of monastic life. But in return they provided a service crucial to the success of Saidaiji's expansion into the countryside: they handled the dead, enabling the higher echelons of Vinaya priests to offer great numbers of funerals throughout the countryside, an activity that helped the movement gain an even stronger hold in the countryside.

The successful expansion of Eison's Saidaiji Vinaya movement is surely attributable to his innovative uses of the precepts. Eison used the precepts not only to bestow merit upon laypeople, but also as a way of integrating a diverse range of people — elite and non-elite, educated and uneducated, cosmopolitan and provincial — into the membership of his order. At the top, the popularity of his precept-conferral ceremonies enabled him to win the political and economic support of court and warrior elites who simply wanted to partake in the merit of receiving the precepts. On the ground, however, the ceremonies enabled his group to incorporate ordinary laypeople. Through the rites of precept conferral, Eison established powerful links between local lay communities and his Saidaiji-based monastic order. The most obvious illustration of this coming together, of course, lies in the fact that the conferrals brought the two groups together for ritual performances. But

on a more profound level, Eison's use of various levels of precept conferral expanded the scope of the monastic order and created a spectrum of possible roles within it. Since many of these roles could not be unambiguously labeled as monastic or lay, their very existence obscured the distinction between monks and the laity. In this sense, Eison's system of precept conferral offered a new model of lay-monastic interaction and interdependence. Although Eison's group was clearly hierarchical, the fact that it created so many positions and opportunities for laypeople (even if some of these methods of inclusion might today be viewed as exploitative) must have greatly contributed to its success in the countryside. If the precept-conferral ritual can be understood as a form of cultural or spiritual capital, then Eison's skillful use of that capital was surely unprecedented.

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Josephus on Fate, Free Will, and Ancient Jewish Types of Compatibilism

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Abstract

Recent scholarship on fate and free will in ancient Judaism is characterized by a lack of precision with regard to the nature of these disputes. There is also some disagreement concerning the degree to which the disparate positions can be constructively compared with either Hellenistic philosophical approaches or later rabbinic theological ones. It is argued here that Josephus's brief typology of ancient Jewish disputes on this topic finds confirmation in other ancient Jewish literature, especially the Wisdom of Ben Sira, the sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls, and later rabbinic literature. Yet it is imperative to nuance Josephus's typology so as to avoid imposing Hellenistic philosophical systems onto ancient Jewish theological ones. These observations hold true especially when it comes to understanding the balance between fate and free will — the “compatibilism” — that characterizes the Pharisaic approach. It is rarely noticed that Josephus's accounts attribute to this group two distinct ways of balancing fate and free will. On the one hand, each of these two approaches finds distinct analogues within rabbinic literature, a fact that further confirms both Josephus's reliability and the productivity of comparing his accounts with later rabbinic traditions. On the other hand, neither of the two types of compatibilism attributed by Josephus to the Pharisees can be identified with Stoic compatibilism. Nonetheless, the term “compatibilism” remains the most appropriate term for distinguishing the Pharisaic compromises from the more extreme (but by no means uncomplicated) positions that seem to have characterized the Sadducees and Essenes in Josephus's day.

Keywords

compatibilism, fate, free will, Josephus, Pharisees, Stoicism

Introduction

For philosophers, the term “compatibilism” refers to the varied efforts to maintain that determinism and free will are not contradictory, but compatible.¹ In particular, the term often refers to the position that holds that a strict determinism can still allow for the possibility that individuals make free and unrestrained decisions, and are therefore responsible for their actions, despite the fact that the decisions and their consequences are determined in advance. The term has been borrowed and utilized in some recent discussions of biblical (Christian) theology that address the troubled question of divine foreknowledge.² Moving closer to our interests, the term also appears occasionally in treatments of Jewish theology, particularly with regard to the balance between fate and free will that characterizes Josephus’s descriptions of the Pharisees (cf. Josephus, *War* 2.162–163; *Ant.* 13.172; 18.13).³ Yet at the same time, the term “compatibilism” — or the compromise position to which the term ought to refer — has also been applied to other ancient Jewish groups, even the ostensibly deterministic (and possibly Essene) Dead Sea sectarians.⁴ It is hoped that the present survey will shed some light on ancient Jewish approaches to fate and free will and at the same time offer some helpful clarifications and practical suggestions for the use of the term “compatibilism” in the context of ancient Judaism.

After presenting a brief preliminary sketch of Josephus’s tripartite theological typology (section I), we will see how confusions have emerged regarding the term “compatibilism” and the varied ancient Jewish approaches to fate and free will (section II). In response to this confusion, a closer survey of the evidence will reveal that Josephus’s tripartite schema can be salvaged, once we get past its oversimplifications (section III). Having done this, we will go one step further,

¹) For a brief survey of the modern philosophical issues, addressed to the general reader, see Pink 2004; on the usage and meaning of the term “compatibilism,” see esp. 18–19, 43–72, 109–10. For a more thorough review of the terms and issues with regard to Stoic philosophy, see Bobzien 1998a:16–58.

²) See, for example, Roy 2006:13–25, and Feinberg 1986. As we will see, the debate among contemporary Evangelical Christians, as reflected especially in these two works, is in some respects comparable to the debate among ancient Jewish sects.

³) See, for example, Duhaime 2000.

⁴) See the literature surveyed and cited in section II below.

demonstrating that at least two distinct modes of compatibilism are spoken of by Josephus and in evidence in ancient Jewish and rabbinic sources (section IV). At this point, we will be able to see more clearly the ways in which the various modes of ancient Jewish compatibilism differ from their ancient (and even modern) philosophical counterparts (section V). Ironically, it will be seen that the term “compatibilism” may prove most helpful in the study of ancient Judaism when it is used in a somewhat imprecise manner. In the end, we will find that it is indeed possible to defend the general accuracy and utility of Josephus’s typology of the ancient Jewish sects. But doing so requires recognizing both the similarities and the differences between the Hellenistic philosophical and ancient Jewish theological debates. It also requires clarifying the contours and characteristics of the compromise positions that Josephus ascribes to Pharisees, and which were apparently later espoused by a number of rabbinic traditions.⁵

I. Fate, Free Will, and Compatibilism: A Preliminary Sketch

For any discussion of ancient Jewish views regarding fate and free will, we do well to begin with Josephus’s brief schematization of ancient Jewish theology. As is well known, on a number of occasions in his works, Josephus compares and contrasts the three major sects (αἱρέσεις)⁶ of ancient Judaism: Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes (*War* 2.119–166; *Ant.* 13.171–173, 18.11–25).⁷ The Essenes, he states, “declare that fate

⁵ It must be emphasized that, for the present purposes, we are not interested in presenting a systematic account of rabbinic theology, or even a general description of the rabbinic approach(es) to fate and free will. We are also not interested in dating rabbinic texts or individual rabbinic traditions. Rabbinic sources will be used here simply for the purposes of illuminating and evaluating Josephus’s descriptions of ancient Jewish theologies. Lacking any reliably Pharisaic sources, we believe it is relevant to consider whether or not Josephus’s descriptions of the Pharisaic approach(es) to fate and free will find parallels in other ancient Jewish sources, including rabbinic traditions, understanding full well that rabbinic sources are significantly later than Josephus, just as sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls (which are frequently compared to the Essenes) are significantly earlier than Josephus.

⁶ On this term, see Mason 1991:125–28.

⁷ For further discussion of these accounts (with a particular focus on the Pharisees), see Mason 1991:120–77, 196–212, 281–308; for a survey of scholarship on fate and

(εἰμαρμένη) is the mistress of all things, and that nothing befalls people unless it be in accordance with her decree” (*Ant.* 13.172).⁸ By contrast, the Sadducees “do away with fate, holding that there is no such thing” (13.173), while the Pharisees hold a middle position, believing that “certain events are the work of fate, but not all; as to other events it depends on ourselves whether they shall take place or not” (13.172). Josephus then clarifies or nuances this typology, noting that the doctrine of the Essenes “is wont to leave everything in the hands of God” (*Ant.* 18.18). In addition to denying fate, the Sadducees “remove God beyond, not merely the commission, but the very sight, of evil. They maintain that a person has the free choice of good or evil, and that it rests with each person’s will whether to follow the one or the other” (*War* 2.164–165). As we will see (in sections II and III below), this sketch is not without its problems. But the first impression certainly rings true, especially when nearly exact parallels seem to present themselves from three distinct realms of ancient literature: rabbinic traditions, the Dead Sea scrolls, and the Wisdom of Ben Sira.

But before going any further, perhaps some terminological clarifications are in order. Josephus speaks of “fate” (εἰμαρμένη), which can be defined broadly as the belief that things are brought about, of necessity, by set causes or impersonal powers.⁹ It has long been noted that

free will in Josephus, see 384–98. One classic treatment remains Moore 1929. For a recent review of the rhetorical function of these accounts in Josephus’s writings, see Haaland 2007.

⁸) Translations of Josephus follow, with slight modifications, the Loeb Classical Library edition (Thackeray 1926–65).

⁹) For general discussion and definitions of these terms as used in religious studies and theology, see Bolle 1987. For Hellenistic definitions, see Moore 1929 and Bobzien 1998a. For contemporary philosophic definitions that are influenced (but not determined) by the Hellenistic definitions, see Pink 2004. As we will see below, it is important to bear in mind that the contours of the philosophical debates both ancient and modern are much wider than the debates within Jewish theology, and confusions arise for precisely this reason. It could therefore be argued that philosophic terms should not be used at all in discussions of the theological disputes. But the invention of further vocabulary for the various overlapping concepts is unlikely to help clarify these matters. And besides, philosophic terms have been used with regard to the Jewish theological debates since the time of Josephus. So we do well to work with philosophical vocabulary to the extent this is possible, and indicate when necessary the ways in which the terms’ nuances change in disparate contexts.

Josephus's discussion is colored by Hellenistic philosophical concerns, making use of Stoic terminology in particular.¹⁰ It is of course unlikely that ancient Jews who otherwise believed in God granted the existence of a separate or impersonal power — Fate — governing events. Thus when speaking of Jewish theologies, most prefer to use the terms “determinism,” “predeterminism” or “predestination.” The first two can be taken as referring more to the belief that all events, including human behaviors, are inexorably brought about by previous causes (Marcoulesco 1987). The prefix “pre-” is added to the more common philosophic “determinism” particularly in theological contexts, where it is desired to emphasize that the fixed causation of events follows a previously established divine plan. Predestination is generally understood as a specific form of theistic predeterminism, one that is especially focused on the destinies of individual human beings. Predestination asserts that God has long ago decided that salvation will be extended to some, but not to others (Wallace 1987). While the terms can mean rather different things in disparate religious or philosophical contexts, the differences dissipate somewhat in developed theologies of religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which put a premium on questions concerning individual salvation and assert the existence of a single, omniscient and omnipotent God. Both “predeterminism,” and “predestination,” assert God's absolute foreknowledge of and control over future events and lead toward the denial of free choice — just as Josephus understands these matters. In what follows, we will eschew the term “fate” (except when speaking of Josephus); the other terms will be used with the nuances noted here kept in mind.

a. Compatibilism among the Pharisees and the Rabbis

It has long been noted that Josephus's description of the Pharisaic position finds an analogue in assorted statements in rabbinic literature. Perhaps the most frequently cited passage is Mishnah *Avot* 3.16,¹¹ which is

¹⁰ See the classic treatment by Moore (1929) as well as the more recent treatment by Mason 1991:120–77, 196–212, 281–308. Less frequently cited, but important nonetheless, is Flusser 1963, reprinted in Flusser 2002:210–21. Because the recent reprint also includes the original pagination, all page references below will cite the original pagination only.

¹¹ See, for example, Finkelstein 1962:1.252–53, as well as Thackeray's note d to

commonly translated, in part, so as to say: “All is foreseen, but freedom of choice is given.”¹² So understood, the statement — traditionally and commonly attributed to R. Akiba¹³ — embraces the compatibilist paradox and is, therefore, practically philosophic in both form and content.¹⁴ A similar — but not identical — view is attributed to the early Palestinian *amora* R. Hanina bar Hama in a number of passages of the Babylonian Talmud (e.g., *b. Ber.* 33b), to the effect that “everything is in the hands of heaven, except for the fear of heaven.”¹⁵ According to a number of authorities, these statements both characterize the rabbinic position on the whole, and exhibit continuity with the Pharisaic position, as described by Josephus.¹⁶

Josephus, *War* 2.163 (in LCL edition, Thackeray 1926–65:2.385) and L. H. Feldman’s note 3 to *Antiquities* 18.13 (in LCL edition, Thackeray 1926–65:9.11–12).

¹² Such is the translation of Danby 1933:452; we also follow here Danby’s versification, but note that the versification of this tractate varies considerably. The passage is translated similarly by, among others, Taylor 1897:59; Herford 1962:88; Hertz 1945:61; Neusner 1988:660–61; see also Albeck 1952–58:4.367 (where the passage is explained in this manner) and 497 (where Akiba’s view is compared to the Pharisees explicitly). Despite this near unanimity, there is some evidence (as we will see in section III below) for an alternative understanding of the passage.

¹³ Precisely speaking, the statement is anonymous. The attribution to R. Akiba results from carrying over the attribution from a previous statement (3.14), even though our passage lacks the tractate’s common way of connecting one statement to another (the phrase “He used to say” — cf. 3.15 and 3.17). See the comments offered by Gordon Tucker in Heschel 2005:216 n.27. Of course, even if the attribution to R. Akiba were unambiguous, the historical reliability of the attribution would still remain questionable. Throughout this essay, attributions of statements to named authorities will be noted, under the assumption that this data is potentially useful for analytic purposes and in any event helpful heuristically for those who are familiar with rabbinic literature. For what it is worth, a similar (but not identical) statement is attributed to R. Eliezer, the son of Yosi the Galilean in *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* B 44 (ed. Schechter 1887:123 [62a]).

¹⁴ See Tucker’s comments in Heschel 2005:209 and Winston 2001:53–54.

¹⁵ This tradition (along with some parallels, and in comparison to Josephus’s Pharisees), will be discussed further in section IV, part b, below.

¹⁶ In addition to works cited in n.11 above, see, e.g., Kohler 1905:664–65. Compare the more recent (and more thorough) treatment of Urbach 1987:255–85. Though Urbach understands *m. Avot* 3.16 as advocating freedom of choice (256–60), he compiles other evidence for the varied compromise positions articulated in rabbinic sources.

b. Fate among Essenes and the Qumran Sectarrians

The association between the Dead Sea scrolls and Josephus's Essenes is commonplace, though not uncontroversial.¹⁷ For our purposes we can safely set aside the broader question of the Essene hypothesis and focus here on the degree to which the theology Josephus attributes to the Essenes finds parallels in sectarian literature from Qumran. As is well known, the sectarian *Rule of the Community* contains what may be the clearest articulation of predestinarian ideas in all ancient Jewish literature (1QS III, 15–21; IV, 18–20):¹⁸

From the God of knowledge comes all that is and shall be. Before ever they existed, he established their whole design, and when, as ordained for them, they came into being, it is in accord with his glorious design that they accomplish their task without change. The laws of all things are in his hand, and he provides them with all their needs. He has created man to govern the world, and has appointed for him two spirits in which to walk until the time of his visitation: the spirits of truth and injustice. Those born of truth spring from a mountain of light, but those born of injustice spring from a source of darkness. All the children of righteousness are ruled by the Prince of Light and walk in the ways of light, but all the children of injustice are ruled by the Angel of Darkness and walk in the ways of darkness. . . .

But in the mysteries of his understanding, and in his glorious wisdom, God has ordained an end for injustice, and at the time of the visitation he will destroy it forever. Then truth, which has wallowed in the ways of wickedness during the dominion of injustice until the appointed time of judgment, shall arise in the world forever. . . .

Similar sentiments are expressed elsewhere in the Qumran corpus, most notably in the *Damascus Document* (e.g., II, 3–10), the *War Scroll* (esp. 1QM I, 1–9), and the *Thanksgiving Hymns* (e.g., 1QH^a VII, 12–14; IX, 7–20).¹⁹

Of course, we cannot accurately speak of a simple identity between the theology of Josephus's Essenes and that of the Dead Sea sectarians. As noted already, Josephus's discussion of fate is unmistakably colored

¹⁷ For a classic articulation of the Essene hypothesis, see Cross 1995:54–87; for a current articulation of the dissenting view, see Baumgarten 2004.

¹⁸ Translations of scrolls here and below follow Vermes 1997.

¹⁹ For a brief survey of predestination in the Scrolls, see Lange 1995; on the *Thanksgiving Hymns*, see Merrill 1975:16–23. For a survey including comparisons with later Protestant doctrines, see Klawans (forthcoming).

by the influence of contemporary Greek philosophic concerns (we will return to this issue in section IV below). Josephus also says nothing about the dualism expressed in 1QS: if his Essenes believed in powers of darkness, Josephus decided not to tell us this. Yet a striking similarity remains: Josephus describes the Essenes as believing in the predetermination of all events, to the exclusion of human freedom. The Dead Sea sectarians, it appears, emphasized God's omniscience and his power to such a degree that all proceeds according to a divine plan, which has been put in place long ago. If this is something other than a belief in fate, it sure is close.

c. Free Will among the Sadducees and Ben Sira

The situation is more complicated with regard to Josephus's fate-deniers, the Sadducees, for no verifiably Sadducean literature has been preserved. Still it has, from time to time, been noted that the Sadducean position on free will finds a striking precedent in the Wisdom of Ben Sira, a work commonly believed to have been composed in Jerusalem, in early the second century BCE.²⁰ The book builds on the wisdom tradition of ancient Israel, but represents a remarkable synthesis of previous biblical traditions and themes. What is important for our concerns can be found in the following passage (15:11–20).²¹

- (11) Say not, "It was God's doing that I fell away";
for what he hates, he does not do.
- (12) Say not, "It was he who led me astray";
for he has no need of the sinful.
- (13) Abominable wickedness the Lord hates;
he does not let it befall those who fear him.
- (14) It was he from the first, when he created humankind,
who made them subject to their own free choice.
- (15) If you choose, you can keep his commandment
fidelity is the doing of his will.

²⁰) The description of Ben Sira's theology as proto-Sadducean was once commonplace. See, for example, Crenshaw 1975:55 and Di Lella 1966:140. More recently, see Segal 2004:254–55. In Klawans 2007, I argue that the wisdom tradition in general should be taken more seriously when considering the background and contours of Sadducean thought.

²¹) Translation of Sirach here and below follows Skehan and Di Lella 1987.

- (16) There are poured out before you fire and water;
to whichever you choose you can stretch forth your hands.
- (17) Before each person are life and death;
whichever one chooses will be given him.
- (18) For great is the wisdom of the Lord;
he is mighty in power and sees everything;
- (19) The eyes of God see his handiwork
and he knows every person's action.
- (20) He has not commanded anyone to be wicked
nor will he be lenient with liars.

What we find in this passage is the clear combination of three related, but separable, ideas: the freedom of choice (esp. vv. 14–17), the denial that anyone could be destined to do evil (vv. 11–12, 20) and God's absolute opposition to evil (vv. 13, 20). The combination of ideas is strikingly similar to Josephus's assertion that the Sadducees "do away with fate altogether, and remove God beyond not merely the commission, but the very sight of evil. They maintain that man has the free choice of good and evil..." (*War* 2.164–165).

The passage is important for our concerns for a number of reasons. First, the passage confirms that there were Jews in the second century BCE who articulated a theology that is strikingly in line with what Josephus attributes to the Sadducees at a later period. This in turn lends some additional credence (albeit indirect) to the effort of identifying the beliefs of Josephus's Essenes with other known literature from ancient Judaism, such as the Qumran scrolls. The second aspect of the passage that is important for our concerns is its polemical tone ("Do not say..."). Ben Sira not only confirms that some Jews denied fate in their assertion of free choice. The wisdom book at the same time confirms that these issues were up for debate. Digging just a bit deeper we find that there are striking similarities between Josephus's Essenes and the positions of Ben Sira's opponents: both believed that sinners were destined to sin. The fourth significance for this text is what it reveals about the nature of Ben Sira's dispute with predeterminism: By denying human beings the freedom of choice — and the moral responsibility that comes along with it — Ben Sira believes his opponents implicate God in the commission of evil. Only by separating God from evil (as we find in both Ben Sira and Josephus's Sadducees) — and by asserting that evil comes about as a result of human choice — is God's punishment

of the wicked both deserved and just. This brings us, at last, to a fifth point: for Ben Sira, the assertion of human freedom is inextricably tied to God's earthly justice. Indeed, it is no accident that the very next chapter of Sirach (16:1–23) contains an elaborate discussion of the punishment of the wicked, along with an assertion of divine justice. Josephus says just as much about the Sadducees: while they deny rewards and punishments after death (*Ant.* 18.16; *War* 2.165), they assert just the same (*Ant.* 13.173) that “we ourselves are responsible for our well-being, while we suffer misfortune through our own thoughtlessness” (ἀβουλίας; cf. Prov. [LXX] 14:17; Bar. 3:28).

II. Confounding Compatibilism

This is hardly to say that the case is closed on the question of whether we can identify the theology of the rabbis, Ben Sira, and Qumran with, respectively, Josephus's Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. Indeed, once we look beyond the surface similarities outlined above, we find that Josephus's typology fails to account for the various levels of nuance we find within the various ancient Jewish sources.

a. Nuancing Akiba's Position

As noted above, there is some dispute concerning the sense of the statement ostensibly attributed to R. Akiba in *m. Avot* 3.16. Despite the frequency with which the Hebrew term *tzafuy* is translated as “foreseen,” there are very good reasons to believe that what is meant here is simply that everything is “seen.”²² This would accord with the general

²² Urbach 1987:257–58, 802–3 n.11; the possibility of this sense was also discussed by Taylor 1897:59 n.28 and 160, though his translation as noted above reads “foreseen.” Taylor also collects evidence from medieval manuscripts and commentaries preserving the alternate reading “all is set forth” (*tzafun*). See Taylor 1900:122, 152. Needless to say, the interpretation of *m. Avot* 3.16 often coincides with the philosophic view of the interpreter. Maimonides' direct commentary on the passage understands *tzafuy* in the sense of foresight, in line with his deterministic (and/or compatibilistic) view. For Maimonides' understanding of *m. Avot*, see Qafih 1976–78:4.284–85 (comment *ad loc.* to *m. Avot*) and cf. the philosopher's seemingly libertarian assertions in 4.260–66 (= ch. 8 of Maimonides' “Eight Chapters” introducing *m. Avot*). Maimonides' determinism is expressed especially in *Guide of the Perplexed* II.48 (trans.

force of the sayings attributed to Akiba in this chapter, to the effect that humans are free and God is the overseeing judge (3.14–16). In this respect, the view attributed to Akiba finds a close parallel in *Psalms of Solomon* 9:4:²³

Our works (are) in the choosing and power of our souls;
to do right and wrong in the works of our hands
and in your righteousness, you oversee human beings.

Here too we find the assertion of choice coupled with the declaration of God as the overseeing judge. While these statements are indeed parallel, scholars who try to connect *Psalms of Solomon* (esp. 9:4) with the Pharisees, based in part on a comparison with *m. Avot* 3.16,²⁴ are mistaken: neither statement necessarily affirms determinism at all, so neither statement qualifies as compatibilist. The focus on God as an all-seeing judge is even emphasized in Sirach (16:17): “Do not say, ‘I am hidden from the Lord, and who from on high has me in mind?’” As we will see below (section IV), there are a number of rabbinic traditions that can be viewed as articulating compatibilist perspectives; but the statement traditionally attributed to Akiba in *m. Avot* 3.16 is closer to being libertarian.²⁵

Pines 1963:2.409–12). On Maimonides’ approach to fate and free will, see Sokol 1998. Sokol’s understanding of Maimonides’ approach to fate and free will is not all that different from the early Stoic view as will be discussed below in section V.

²³) Translation follows Wright 1983.

²⁴) See, for example, Finkelstein 1962:1.251–53; Maier 1981:264–350. See, however, Charlesworth’s assessment in Wright 1983:642, which articulates the more generally accepted approach today: “It is unwise to label these psalms as either Pharisaic or Essene.”

²⁵) See n.22 above. Perhaps the most well-known rabbinic assertion of human freedom is *Sifre Deut.* §§ 53–54 (on Deut. 11:26–27; ed. Finkelstein 1993:120–22). We also know, of course, that other rabbinic traditions move in the other direction, toward a more certain determinism: consider, for example, the saying attributed to R. Hanina bar Hama in *b. Hullin* 7b: “A person does not bruise a finger below, unless it be announced concerning him on high, for it is said (Prov. 20:24), ‘a person’s steps are decided by the Lord...’” This and other deterministic rabbinic traditions are collected and discussed in Urbach 1987:276–81.

b. Free Will among Essenes and at Qumran

Even for those who associate Josephus's Essenes with the Dead Sea sectarians, it is not uncommon to find the recognition that alongside the deterministic passages quoted above, other passages among the sectarian scrolls appear to step away from such a view. E. P. Sanders noted decades ago that the sectarian literature assumes that the righteous will repent (e.g., 1QS V, 14), and that the wicked follow their own stubborn hearts (e.g., II, 25–26). Such passages, for Sanders, indicate “how far the sectarians were from denying [humanity's] freedom of choice” (Sanders 1977:263). Indeed, the *Rule of the Community* itself insists that those who join the community must decide to do so of their own volition (e.g., 1QS V, 8, 10, 22). Eugene Merrill, after surveying references to voluntary repentance in the *Thanksgiving Hymns* in particular, similarly concludes that the sectarians “found it possible to hold for the need for (*sic*) individual voluntary response to Divine promptings within the framework of a rigid predestinarianism” (Merrill 1975:45, cf. 16, 58). More recently, Eileen Schuller has pointed out that the predeterminism of the sect did not prevent the group from praying for forgiveness from sin (e.g., 1QH^a XIX, 29–31; cf. VIII, 29–30) and for victory in the final battle against evil (1QM XV, 5) (Schuller 2000:39–43). Yet why would the sons of light have to pray for atonement? And wouldn't their victory already be predetermined? Indeed, Schuller concludes her essay with the suggestion that the Dead Sea sectarians may never have become thoroughly deterministic (Schuller 2000:45). As noted above, Jean Duhaime moves in a similar direction when he suggests that the Dead Sea sectarians' approach to the issue may have been “compatibilist” (Duhaime 2000). Without necessarily making use of this particular term, it has indeed become commonplace to assert that the sectarians reserved some place for free will in their otherwise deterministic system.²⁶ Some have even settled on the fact that the theology of the Dead Sea sectarians must have been to some extent unsystematic and possibly inconsistent,²⁷ a conclusion that is really not so far from

²⁶ In addition to the works cited above, see e.g., Jassen 2007:11, and also Mason 1991:333–34. This view is not unanimous, however. Martone (2000:619) states that the sect's strict determinism “left no room for human freedom.”

²⁷ So, e.g., Merrill 1975:16, 45, 58; Ringgren 1963:109–11, and Sanders 1977:265.

the view that compares the Dead Sea sectarians with Josephus's Pharisees, since such writers often decline to explain how the sectarians' position is any less systematic or consistent than any other compromise position might be.

c. Predestination in Ben Sira

Problems also emerge when Josephus's Sadducees are compared with the position espoused in the Wisdom of Ben Sira. The first problem stems from the one clear contrast between them: Ben Sira asserts, along with earlier wisdom traditions, that God sees all, and knows when evil is committed (Sir. 16:17–23; cf. Prov. 15:3; Job 34:21–22). Josephus, by contrast, implies that God is removed in some fashion from even seeing evil (*War* 2.164). Indeed, it is precisely with regard to this extreme statement by Josephus that some have asserted that Sadducaism must have amounted to atheism in practice, if not quite in theory: their God was without concern for human morality.²⁸ It is however difficult to accept the truth of Josephus's description as it stands: if God were removed from the sight of evil, would he not also be removed from the sight of any good? Would that not then mean (against *Ant.* 13.173) that there would be no form of even earthly justice? So how to explain this contradiction? Three possibilities present themselves: the stronger one is that Josephus (or his source) is exaggerating the matter, for polemical or simply rhetorical purposes.²⁹ Another possibility is that Josephus's comments were influenced by or developed from the biblical idea of God hiding his face from his people, in the event that they choose not to follow God's ways (e.g., Deut. 31:17, 18; 32:20; cf. Isa. 29:2).³⁰

²⁸ See, e.g., Meyer 1971:46; cf. Baumbach 1989:175, and the literature cited there. Note the critique of Stemmerger 1995:68–70. Similar views were articulated earlier by Flusser 1963:321–22.

²⁹ On the Sadducees' purported atheism as relating to Josephus's biases, see Baumbach 1989:175. Flusser (1963:321–22; 1977) suggests that Josephus let himself get carried away by his philosophical comparison, exaggerating the Sadducean view. Stemmerger (1995:70) asserts that Josephus is simply mistaken.

³⁰ This insight derives from an observation drawn by Ms. Sarah J. Chandonnet, who perspicaciously asked in class about Josephus's Sadducees upon reading (in Vermes's English translation) CD I, 3–4 and II, 8–9, which speak of God hiding his face from a sinful Israel.

Although I find the latter idea tantalizing, I have not been able to find any clear textual linkage between Josephus's description of the Sadducees' beliefs and the biblical notion of God hiding his face. This brings us back to the first possibility that Josephus or his sources are exaggerating the Sadducean view in this case.³¹ Of course, there is also a third possibility: that Josephus's Sadducees cannot be identified with the views of Ben Sira.

The second problem for the comparison between Ben Sira and the Sadducees comes when we consider the relationship between Sirach 15 (quoted above) and Sirach 33:7–15:

- (7) Why is one day more important than another,
when the same sun lights up every day of the year?
- (8) By the Lord's knowledge they are kept distinct;
among them he designates seasons and feasts.
- (9) Some he exalts and sanctifies,
and others he lists as ordinary days.
- (10) So, too, all people are of clay,
for from earth humankind was formed;
- (11) Yet in the fullness of his understanding the Lord makes people unlike:
in different paths he has them walk.
- (12) Some he blesses and makes great,
some he sanctifies and draws to himself.
Others he curses and brings low,
and expels them from their place.
- (13) Like clay in the hand of a potter,
to be molded according to his pleasure,
So are people in the hands of their Maker,
to be requited according as he judges them.
- (14) As evil contrasts with good, and death with life,
so are sinners in contrast with the just;
- (15) See now all the works of the Most High:
they come in pairs, the one the opposite of the other.

At first reading, the passage has a deterministic sound to it (cf. also 42:24). According to some interpreters, this passage can even be compared to the "Treatise of the Two Spirits" from the *Rule of the Community* (Winter 1955; so also Flusser 1963:320 n.7). The appearance, therefore, of

³¹) On Josephus's anti-Sadducean views, see Baumbach 1989:175–78; compare Stemmerger 1995:5–20.

an ostensibly deterministic passage such as this within the same work as another emphasizing free choice (15:11–20) leads some interpreters to see Ben Sira as a precursor not of the Sadducean position, but of the Pharisaic or rabbinic one (e.g., Hengel 1974:1.141; M. Segal 1958:29; Winston 1979:49–50 and 1989 [=2001:35–43]).

Now we have come to the crux of the problem. If we follow one line of thought (Hengel, Segal and Winston) then the juxtaposition of the material from Sirach chapters 15 and 33 leads to the conclusion that Ben Sira was a compatibilist, just like Josephus's Pharisees and the even later rabbis. If we follow another line of thought (Duhaime, Ringgren, Sanders and Schuller) then we can with some justification compare the theology of the Dead Sea sect with Josephus's Pharisees too. Did all (or most) of these texts express virtually the same theology?³² Were all ancient Jews compatibilists?³³ This indeed seems to be the direction in which a number of scholars are moving. But this solution to the seeming contradictions within and among the sources only leads to further problems: If the *Rule of the Community* is not deterministic, then what might a deterministic ancient Jewish document look like? If the theology of both Sirach and 1QS are to be compared with the compatibilism of the Pharisees and later rabbinic Judaism, then are we not left with an undifferentiated hodge-podge of ancient Jewish compatibilism? If all ancient Jews were compatibilists, then what on earth was Josephus talking about when he stated repeatedly that Jews argued about such matters?

Indeed, what is at stake here is the sense and reliability of Josephus's tripartite typology. The accuracy and integrity of these accounts were attacked long ago by George Foot Moore, who asserted that Josephus likely, and rather mindlessly, copied them from the writings of Herod's court historian, Nicolaus of Damascus — a person presumably more

³²) See, e.g., Moore 1927–30:1.454–59.

³³) See Winston 1979:46–58, who compares Qumran, Sirach and rabbinic literature to the compatibilist position of the Hellenistic Stoic philosophers; this is also the broad thrust of Winston 2001:11–56. Winston's commentaries and essays are inspiring, especially insofar as they exhibit depth in both ancient Jewish and Hellenistic philosophical sources. It is rather surprising to me, however, that Winston's various essays on fate and free will in ancient Judaism (many of which are collected in 2001) virtually ignore Josephus's tripartite typology of the ancient Jewish sects.

familiar with, and sympathetic to, Greek philosophy than Jewish theology (so Moore 1929). But much has changed since Moore published his study in 1929. Of course, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has proved to many scholars that the Qumran sect (likely related to the Essenes) espoused deterministic views of some sort, lending some credence to Josephus's account (e.g., Flusser 1963). But another development has taken place in Josephan studies: Just as in biblical studies, the knee-jerk resort to source-criticism as the solution to apparent inconsistencies has given way to more considered evaluations of Josephus's style and usages.³⁴ All this, in turn, lends greater weight to the one piece of evidence, there all the time, that could have confirmed, for those willing to entertain this possibility, that Josephus was onto something: Sirach 15, which espouses free will even as it argues against determinism. If all ancient Jews were compatibilists of one sort or another, with whom was Ben Sira arguing? And if we have more than one position espoused among the various compromises, does it not behoove us to try to classify them in some manner?

III. Confining Compatibilism

For the sake of argument, let us assume that the Pharisaic compromise position ought to be described as compatibilist, though we will examine this issue more thoroughly in sections IV and V below. The question here then becomes whether we can identify among ancient Jewish sources distinct approaches taken at either extreme. I think we can.

a. Clarifying Theological Libertarianism

Let us turn first to the libertarian side, and consider once again the meaning and purpose of Sirach 33. As noted above, that chapter — with its discussion of sacred and profane days, as compared to holy and sinful people — has been understood by some interpreters as an assertion of predeterminism or even double predestination (e.g., Flusser 1963:320 n.7; M. Segal 1958:29; Winston 2001:18, 47–48; Winter 1955). This would then mean that Ben Sira's theology was

³⁴ See, especially, Mason 1991. Of course, even if Josephus wrote the passages himself, they may still be inaccurate, as a result of Josephus's biases, errors, or simplifications.

either compatibilist or contradictory, as Sirach 15 (also quoted above) is rather clear in its assertion of free will.

The resolution of this difficulty can be found when we recognize the difference between predestination and divine election. As we have indicated earlier, predestination is understood here as the belief that all has been determined ahead of time, including especially who will be sinful and who will be righteous. Divine election, by contrast, refers to the idea that a certain group or nation has been singled out from among others for both revelation and responsibility. For Jews, of course, divine election refers to the belief that the covenants established with Abraham and Moses are to be passed down generation to generation, with the accidents (or providence) of birth deciding who is born into the covenant and who is not. Divine election however is not tantamount to predestination; this distinction is at the root of the confusions surrounding Sirach 33 quoted above.

A careful re-reading of Sirach 33 demonstrates that determinism is far from the sage's mind here. The juxtaposition of holy and profane days (vv. 7–9) with holy and cursed people (vv. 10–12) is not meant to suggest that God has determined in advance the actions of individual sinners. The juxtaposition, rather, serves to explain the nature of divine election: just as the Sabbath is holy among days, so too the Jewish people are holy among peoples.³⁵ There is of course a deterministic element to the idea of divine election; people cannot choose to be born as Jews or gentiles (though through conversion or apostasy, people can presumably change their inherited status). But whatever element of determinism there is in such a notion, this passage hardly articulates ideas that *any* ancient Jews with some remaining fidelity to the covenants of Abraham and Moses would have found surprising or objectionable. Surely, practically all committed Jews — Sadducees and other fate-deniers included — believed that God had chosen Abraham and established a covenant that continues to separate the Jewish people from the other nations. Therefore, nothing we find in Sirach 33 prevents reaching the conclusion that the sage was a firm believer in free will, just as Sirach 15 tells us. If Sirach 33 is predeterministic, then all ancient Jews become predeterminists. Indeed, this description may not be inherently incor-

³⁵) For this understanding of Sirach, see Skehan and Di Lella 1987:395–401.

rect, as it depends, after all, on how we define the terms. But if we define predeterminism in such a way that it becomes essentially synonymous with divine election, we gain nothing, and we lose the ability to draw a contrast between the book of Genesis (with its belief in divine election) and the *Rule of the Community* (with its belief in predestination). In order to have analytic value, our definitions must be precise enough to allow for the contrast between divine election (which practically all Jews believed) and predeterminism (which was likely the doctrine of the Dead Sea sect and Josephus's Essenes, but not of Ben Sira).

Still, we have learned something by recognizing that an element of predestination can be found in the notion of divine election. Indeed, this is not the only ancient Jewish idea that contains within itself a small measure of determinism. The notion of prophecy, for instance, assumes an element of divine foreknowledge, at least as far as the predicted events are concerned (Isa. 48:3–5):

- (3) The former things I declared long ago
they went out from my mouth and I made them known
then suddenly I did them and they came to pass.
- (4) Because I know that you are obstinate
and your neck is an iron sinew and your forehead brass,
- (5) I declared them to you from long ago,
before they came to pass I announced them to you. . . .

Indeed, even the most bare-bones Jewish eschatology — the simplest assertion that at the end of days the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked will be vanquished (e.g., Amos 9:9–15) — also assumes a modest degree of predeterminism. But other examples of biblical prophecy foretell the future more precisely, such as the naming of Josiah by the unnamed prophet in 1 Kings 13, and the naming of Cyrus in Isaiah 45 by Isaiah of Jerusalem (for un-critical believers who attribute the entire book to the historical prophet). It should come as no surprise then that more recent defenders of biblical determinism have sought to find proof for their doctrine in these and other examples.³⁶ If true prophets can

³⁶ See, for example, Roy 2006:34–72, which discusses the two examples noted above, among many others. See also Boettner 1932:42–46. Boettner follows and expands upon John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I.8.8 (ed. McNeill 1960:1.87–88).

accurately predict the future, then God must indeed have established in advance precisely what will happen.³⁷

Regardless of the force this argument holds for believers in predeterminism, it must be emphasized for our purposes that prophecy — like divine election — cannot be considered to be evidence for a general ancient Jewish determinism. Prophecy can be an argument for determinism; it is not evidence of it. We have seen that Ben Sira asserts freedom of choice and denies determinism. Yet he believes not only in divine election, but also in the truth of the biblical prophets (Sir. 48:23–25; 49:6, 10). Although we cannot be certain, it is likely that the commonly accepted belief in the conditionality of prophecy is what allows for some balance between human freedom and prophecy's truth (see below, section IV b). Without trying to push the comparison between Ben Sira and the Sadducees too far, it is probably reasonable to suppose that the Sadducees — like practically all ancient Jews, to be sure — believed in prophecy as well as divine election, even as they denied that fate controlled the decisions of individual human beings. The ancient Jewish debate about determinism — between Sadducees and Essenes, and between Ben Sira and his opponents — concerned questions apart from divine election and prophesied events and focused rather (just as Josephus and Ben Sira would have us believe) on the narrower question of whether one's individual actions are freely chosen or fore-ordained.

b. Clarifying Theological Predeterminism

When we turn to look again at the sectarian literature from Qumran, we find essentially the inverse of what we found regarding Ben Sira. Scattered references to human decisions can be found in the corpus, but whatever intimations of free will are granted in these texts do not compromise the overall commitment given to predestination. Let us begin with the assertion (e.g., 1QS V, 1) that those who wish to join the community must do so of their own volition. This passage has figured prominently in discussions qualifying the sectarians' determinism (see,

³⁷) In the Hellenistic world, the accuracy of divination and astrology was also seen as evidence for the truth of determinism; see Bobzien 1998a:87–96. It is imperative, however, to refrain from reversing the equation: neither practitioners of, nor believers in, astrology or divination are necessarily determinists. See Stuckrad 2000:3–5.

e.g., Ringgren 1963:109–10; Sanders 1977:263–64; Duhaime 2000: 195–96; Jassen 2007:11). But the issue here is not free will in the theological sense (that human beings are free from divine control). Rather, the issue here seems to be the assertion that joining the community must be voluntary in the sense of being otherwise uncoerced. Regardless of one's view on determinism, there is a difference between intended and unintended behavior, be it accidental or coerced.³⁸ The difference between murder and manslaughter figures significantly in the Pentateuch itself (Num. 35). The difference between intended and unintended transgression also figures in the rules by which the Qumran community ostensibly governed itself (e.g., 1QS VI, 24–VII, 25). So it is not surprising, and is of little consequence, that the sectarians differentiated between self-chosen and coerced righteous behavior as well. For the Qumran sectarians, one's predestined salvation manifests itself by one's unforced willingness to join the community; no one person can rightly impel another to associate with the elect. That human beings make decisions is a fact. The believer in theistic determinism³⁹ — if subsequent Christian manifestations are any guide at all — does not deny the reality of human decisions; the predeterminist simply believes that the results of these processes are foreknown and fore-ordained by God: He knows and establishes what one will choose to do.⁴⁰ And some predeterminists actually go further, and allow that human decisions are *freely* made, even though they are nonetheless foreknown and fore-ordained, for God can know even what one will *freely* choose to do.⁴¹ Therefore, the phenomenon of conversion — to say nothing of other, less dramatic human decisions — poses no threat to a deterministic theology. Strict Calvinists accepted converts in Calvin's day, just as the Amish do in our own. And of course, it is essential to bear in mind that Josephus's Essenes also accepted converts, but only after ensuring their sincerity (*War* 2.137–142). As for other human decisions, Josephus's Essenes distinguish between those weightier decisions that were made

³⁸) For the difference, as it pertains to the philosophical debates, see Bobzien 1998b:134.

³⁹) A number of writers have correctly recognized that theological determinism differs, by necessity, from some philosophical counterparts. See Moore 1929:379 and Flusser 1963:318–19.

⁴⁰) Calvin, *Institutes*, II.4.1–8.

⁴¹) See, for instance, Boettner 1932:208–27 and compare Roy 2006:13–16.

by the elders of the group, and more mundane decisions left to the discretion of individual members (2.134).

Repentance is another theme that figures prominently for those who suggest that the sectarians step away from a full determinism.⁴² But once again, repentance is not an obvious threat to determinism, especially theological determinism. Just as Jewish libertarians had to accept prophecy and divine election as part of their heritage, so too Jewish determinists had to accept the ever-present biblical calls to repentance as part of their system. Once again, a comparison with Christian determinism proves helpful. Even the Protestant arch-determinist himself, John Calvin, asserted that sincere repentance is one of the essential aspects of prayer, as properly performed by the elect (*Institutes* III.20.7). The solution to the problem is simple: if human actions are predetermined, what prevents God from predetermining sincere human repentance? Wouldn't the determinist believe that God controls the mind too?⁴³ Strikingly, there is some indication that the Dead Sea sectarians conceived of matters in precisely these terms with regard to this issue. Among the petitionary prayers preserved in the generally predeterministic *Thanksgiving Hymns* is the following assertion: "You set in the mouth of your servant prayers of thanksgiving..." (1QH^a XIX, 36–37; cf. XVII, 10–11).⁴⁴

What we have observed here is really not so surprising. The ancient Jewish disputes regarding fate and free will were limited at their extremes by certain theological tenets that were shared by most Jews: prophecy, divine election, repentance and the legal/moral difference between coerced and willful human behavior. If we allow these issues to cloud the debate, there simply will not be any debate left to clarify. But in this section and section I above, we found sufficient cause to identify, so far, two distinct positions within these ancient Jewish disputes. On the one side we have deterministic Dead Sea sectarians and their erstwhile compatriots, Josephus's Essenes. On the other side we have the relatively libertarian Ben Sira and Josephus's Sadducees. It is true, as we have

⁴² See, for example, Ringgren 1963:123; Sanders 1977:262–63; Duhaime 2000:196; Jassen 2007:11; for a more thorough discussion, see Schuller 2000.

⁴³ Compare Boettner 1932:214–18 and Calvin, *Institutes*, II.4.7.

⁴⁴ These and other examples are discussed by Schuller 2000:40–41; see also Martone 2000.

seen, that Ben Sira certainly (and the Sadducees too very likely) believed in divine election as well as the predictions of biblical prophecy. It is also true, as we have seen, that the Dead Sea sectarians (and presumably the Essenes as well) differentiated between coerced and voluntary human behavior, and performed acts of penitence in their own religious lives. In all this, these groups remain faithful to the general Judaism of which they were part. But the differences between the groups persist, and for this reason we do well not to elide these differences by viewing them all as “compatibilist.”

And what then of the middle position? How is it that Josephus’s Pharisees and the later rabbis are to be differentiated from these other groups? A simple answer presents itself, one based on the striking similarity between Josephus’s testimony and the few rabbinic statements we have quoted thus far: for the sake of describing ancient Jewish theological debates, we do well to confine “compatibilism” to those ancient Jews who *consciously* and *explicitly* advocated a *compromise* between the seemingly contradictory positions at either extreme. This is precisely how Josephus describes the Pharisaic position, and it appears to be equally true of those rabbinic traditions that assert, for example, in the words attributed to R. Hanina bar Hama: “all is in the hands of heaven except the fear of heaven” (*b. Ber.* 33a).

IV. Categorizing Compatibilisms 1: Two Jewish Views

It is now time to take a closer look at the middle-of-the-road position that Josephus attributes to the Pharisees along with the various rabbinic parallels to this perspective. While there are many discussions of the Pharisaic and rabbinic approaches,⁴⁵ there are few that recognize one important fact: In his discussions of the Pharisees, Josephus attributes to them not just one type of compromise between fate and free will, but two.⁴⁶ And as we will see, both of the compromise positions attributed

⁴⁵ Among the most helpful are Flusser 1963 and Urbach 1987:255–85.

⁴⁶ Steve Mason is among the few scholars who recognize the distinction developed below (1991:203–5, 297). Mason follows, in part, Maier 1981:13–20. What is presented below, however, differs somewhat from both Mason’s and Maier’s understandings of the distinction.

to the Pharisees by Josephus find parallels in rabbinic literature. The purpose of this section, however, is not to argue that the parallels between Josephus's Pharisees and the rabbinic sources serve to demonstrate that rabbinic traditions can be a generally reliable guide to Pharisaic thought and practice independent of external confirmation from verifiably Second Temple period sources. Nor is it our interest here to provide a full account of rabbinic approaches to the present theme. The purpose is, simply, to clarify which particular rabbinic traditions are (or are not) close analogues to Josephus's Pharisees. To the degree to which we do find reasonable parallels between rabbinic sources and Josephus's Pharisees — considering especially the parallels we have already seen between Josephus's typology and other ancient Jewish literature — it may in turn be reasonable to conclude that Josephus could be articulating views that were current in the Second Temple period.⁴⁷

a. Jewish Compatibilism, Type 1 (Fusion)

In Josephus's earliest treatment of the schools, he says that the Pharisees "attribute everything to fate and to God; they hold that to act rightly or otherwise rests, indeed, for the most part with men, but that in each action fate cooperates" (*War* 2.163; on this passage, see Mason 1991: 120–77). As noted above, one of the more frequently suggested parallels is the statement traditionally attributed to R. Akiba (*m. Avot* 3.16): "all is foreseen, yet free will is granted." It was also noted above, however, that the statement is problematic in too many respects to be an instructive parallel: as Urbach argues, the passage may well serve to assert, simply, that all is *seen*. And even if the passage does assert a balance between fate and free will, it does so in a most general manner. Josephus, however, does more than attribute a general balance to the Pharisees. The historian goes further, making three important specifications: First (1), the framework for the compromise is a strong determinism: everything (πάντα) is determined by fate. For that reason,

⁴⁷ It must also be noted that there are many rabbinic traditions that do not closely match either of the two compatibilist views described by Josephus. As Urbach noted in his treatment long ago, the rabbinic traditions preserve the record of "a multifaceted struggle, extending over generations of sages, which cannot be summarized in a dictum by one or another scholar — not even the formulation of Josephus..." (1987:284).

(2) human free will does not independently rule over anything; rather there is, at most, a great many (τὸ πλεῖστον) actions over which human beings make decisions, but nevertheless, in each of these (εἰς ἕκαστον) fate assists. In other words, fate plays a determining role in everything; choice plays a partial role in only a portion of events. Significantly (3), these include decisions to do good or evil (τὸ μὲν πράττειν τὰ δίκαια καὶ μὴ). So the ideological dispute with the Sadducees (clarified in *War* 2.164) remains: the Pharisaic fusion of fate and free will does indeed implicate God in the human performance of evil.

Strikingly, each one of these points is also articulated in Josephus's parallel treatment of the three sects in *Antiquities* 18.13 (on this passage, see Mason 1991:281–308):

Though they postulate that everything is brought about by fate, still they do not deprive the human will of the pursuit of what is in humanity's power, since it was God's good pleasure that there should be a fusion (κρῶσις)⁴⁸ and that the will of humanity with its virtue and vice should be admitted into the council-chamber of fate.

Once again, the starting point is an assertion of divine determinism that applies across the board. Human will has a role, but only with regard to what humans can control, and never fully independently of the fate that pervades everything. But human beings nonetheless have the power to choose good or evil, in some manner that is fused with fate.

Strikingly, some rabbinic sources can be identified that agree with this general perspective, to the effect that the human choice to do good or evil takes place under the guidance of divine providence. For instance, commenting on Prov. 3:34 "At scoffers he scoffs, but to the lowly he shows grace," a tradition attributed to the second generation Palestinian *amora* Resh Laqish states: "If one comes to defile himself, one is given an opening; if one comes to cleanse himself, one is helped" (*b. Shabbat* 104a; *b. Yoma* 38b).⁴⁹ Some interpreters have understood

⁴⁸) On this term — and the text-critical problems associated with this particular reading, as opposed to κρίσις — see Mason 1991:141–42, 295. On the term in Stoic philosophy in general, see Salles 2005:54–61.

⁴⁹) Translations of passages from the Babylonian Talmud here and below follow, with modifications, the Soncino translation (ed. I. Epstein 1961). The Soncino translation,

this statement to the effect that God actively helps the righteous but only passively permits wickedness.⁵⁰ But the verbs in these passages are parallel in form and meaning (after all, opening a door is a helpful action), and thus ought to be understood as equally active. Even more significant is the general thrust of similar rabbinic statements. Consider the slightly more expanded tradition attributed (in the traditional printed edition) to Rav Huna or R. Eleazar⁵¹ (*b. Makkot* 10b): “From the Torah, Prophets and Writings [it can be proven] that whichever direction a person chooses to go, they direct that one in that way.” The passage continues quoting Numbers 22:12 and 20, where God is said to have first forbidden and then commanded Balaam to go along with Balak’s messengers. The passage then quotes Isaiah 48:17: “I the Lord am your God, instructing you for your benefit, guiding you in the way you will go.” For the Writings we are directed, once again, to Proverbs 3:34, quoted above. These traditions — and others like them appearing throughout rabbinic literature⁵² — are the closest and most compelling parallels to Josephus’s descriptions of the Pharisees in *War* 2 and *Antiq-*

in turn, follows the text of the traditional printed editions. Variants preserved in the manuscripts will be noted here only when directly relevant to the issue at hand.

⁵⁰ See Urbach 1987:807 n.51, and H. Freedman’s note *ad loc.* to *B. Shabbat* 104a in the Soncino translation (Epstein 1961). Urbach himself (1987:272–73) correctly rejects this understanding of the passage quoted above, though he incorrectly attributes to Philo the view that God actively helps the righteous while only passively allowing evil. On Philo’s approach to free will, see Wolfson 1947:1.424–62 (esp. 438–41) and also Winston 1974–75 (= 2001:135–50). Certain rabbinic traditions come closer to separating God from evil in some fashion; see, for example, the statement attributed to R. Eleazar in *Genesis Rabbah* 3.6 (ed. Mirkin 1987:1.23–24; ed. Theodor/Albeck 1965:1.23) and to R. Yohanan in *Midrash Tanhuma, Tazria* § 9 (ed. Buber 1885:20b [§ 12]), to the effect that God’s name is not mentioned in direct relation to evil. But as Urbach correctly observes (1987:274–75), the rabbinic fear of dualism trumps the desire to separate God from the creation of and role in evil.

⁵¹ Manuscript traditions preserve further variants on the two possible attributions preserved in the standard printed edition. See Rabbinovicz 1866–97 *ad loc.*, and compare also MS Jerusalem Yad ha-Rav Herzog 1, easily accessible via the Jewish National and University Library’s Online Treasury of Talmudic Manuscripts (<http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/talmud/index.htm>). The variants to the tradition itself preserved in the manuscripts and noted by Rabbinovicz are not significant for our concerns.

⁵² See *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, Va-Yassa* 1 (ed. Lauterbach 1933:2.95–97; ed. Horovitz/Rabin 1970:157–58); *Ba-Hodesh* 2 (ed. Lauterbach 1933:2.203; ed. Horovitz/Rabin 1970:208).

unities 18. In all these traditions, we find a fusion between determinism and free will that in important respects gives pride of place to God's controlling influence over human beings, even at the price of recognizing God's active involvement in human decisions to perform evil deeds.

b. Jewish Compatibilism, Type 2 (Partial Determinism)

As noted above, it is rarely noted — but true nonetheless — that Josephus's more focused discussion of the three schools' distinct views regarding fate and free will (*Ant.* 13.171–173) presents the Pharisaic position in way that differs significantly from what we saw above (13.172).⁵³

As for the Pharisees, they say that certain events but not all (τινὰ καὶ οὐ πάντα) are the work of fate; as to other events, it depends upon ourselves whether they shall take place or not.

In this passage, Josephus states in no uncertain terms that the Pharisees' compromise position is one that limits determinism to certain events — some but not all. For the rest, human beings are allowed to make free and presumably unfettered decisions. Significantly, Josephus here states explicitly that human decisions determine whether or not these non-fated events come about. As the continuation of the passage clarifies, it is the Essenes who see all things as determined by God/fate while the Sadducees do away with fate altogether. So the Pharisees do not in fact see all things as determined. Some events, rather, are determined, while those that depend on human decisions are not.

A number of rabbinic passages provide a nearly exact analogue to the view attributed to the Pharisees by Josephus in this passage. The famous dictum already cited above — “all is in the hands of heaven, except for the fear of heaven” (attributed to R. Hanina bar Hama in *b. Ber.* 33b)⁵⁴ — is one good example. In this statement, just as in *Antiquities* 13, determinism is explicitly limited by whatever events

⁵³) On this passage, see Mason 1991:196–212; Martin 1981; Penner 2001.

⁵⁴) See also *b. Meg.* 25a and *b. Nid.* 16b. A similar, anonymous, tannaitic tradition — quoting Prov. 22:5 — is preserved in *b. Ket.* 30a.

depend on human decisions. The same is true of the fuller, but less frequently quoted, tradition attributed to the third generation Palestinian *amora* R. Hanina bar Papa (*b. Niddah* 16b):⁵⁵

The name of the angel who is in charge of conception is “Night,” and he takes up a drop and places it in the presence of the Holy One, blessed be He, saying, “Sovereign of the universe, what shall be the fate of this drop? Shall it produce a strong man or a weak man, a wise man or a fool, a rich man or a poor man?” Whereas “wicked man” or “righteous one” he does not mention, in agreement with the view of R. Hanina [bar Hama]. For R. Hanina stated: Everything is in the hands of heaven except the fear of heaven, as it is said (Deut. 10:12): “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God...”

Once again, the significant feature of this tradition is the way in which determinism is explicitly confined by the allowance given to free will. Some things — even many things — are determined, but the ever-significant variable of human moral decision operates independently of what is determined. The results of these decisions are neither fated, nor in the hands of heaven. This is in agreement with *Antiquities* 13.172, but in disagreement with the various rabbinic and Josephan passages quoted in the previous section.⁵⁶

Three further rabbinic traditions address distinct themes related to partial determinism, and will help further illustrate the nature of this particular perspective as articulated in rabbinic literature. The first tradition (attributed to the amoraic sage Resh Laqish) addresses the issue of seemingly accidental deaths (*b. Makkot* 10b):⁵⁷

R. Simeon b. Laqish opened his discourse with these [two] texts: “And if a man lie not in wait, *but God cause it to come to hand*; then I will appoint for you a place whither he may flee” (Exod. 21:13) and “As it says in the proverb of the ancients: Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness; but my hand shall not be upon you”

⁵⁵ The translation, again, follows Soncino and the traditional printed edition, which has been compared to MS Vatican 111, available via the Online Treasury of Talmudic Manuscripts.

⁵⁶ In line with the general imprecision in treating Pharisaic and rabbinic compatibilism, Louis Feldman cites *b. Ber.* 33b, *Nid.* 16b as near parallels to *Ant.* 18.13 (see LCL edition, Thackeray 1926–65:9.11–12).

⁵⁷ The translation follows Soncino, and the traditional printed edition. For textual notes and variants, see n.51 above.

(1 Sam. 24:13–14). Of whom does the [former] text speak? Of two persons who had slain, one in error and another with intent, there being witnesses in neither case. The Holy One, blessed be He, appoints them both [to meet] at the same inn; he who had slain with intent sits under the step-ladder and he who had slain in error comes down the step-ladder, falls and kills him. Thus, he who had slain with intent is [duly] slain, while he who had slain in error [duly] goes into banishment. [The text continues with the tradition attributed to Rab Huna or R. Eleazar, quoted in the previous section.]

A number of features of this tradition (and its rabbinic parallels)⁵⁸ are significant. Related to matters discussed in the previous section, we find here too confirmation that many rabbinic traditions were willing to countenance God's active guidance of human sinful behavior. But this tradition disagrees with those discussed in the previous section regarding the matter at the heart of our concern. Here too we find "type 2" Jewish compatibilism. The first incidents of murder and manslaughter referred to in this text are, we must assume, straightforward instances of human transgression, one willful and the other accidental. It is only the second round of carnage — the accidental killing of the murderer by the manslayer — that is orchestrated by God, and this is what is intimated by the problematic biblical phrase (Exod. 21:13; italicized above) to the effect that God caused this to happen. So once again, we find here God's partial providence: some events are brought about by God, others are purely the result of human decision. It remains only to point out that the general thrust of this particular tradition can be reliably pushed back to the second temple period, independent of Josephus. The tradition quoted above finds an almost exact parallel in the writings of Philo of Alexandria (*Spec. Laws* 3.120–123). Philo too, based on Exodus 21:13, discusses an incident where a divinely-assisted instance of accidental homicide serves as providential punishment for previous (and presumably freely-chosen) human behaviors.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Cf. *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, *Nezikin* 4 (ed. Lauterbach 1933:3.35; ed. Horowitz/Rabin 1970:262); *b. Shab.* 32a; *Sifre Deut.* § 229 (on Deut. 22:8; ed. Finkelstein 1993:262).

⁵⁹ See Wolfson 1947:1.438–41, esp. n.37. For Wolfson, this passage also demonstrates Philo's willingness to see God's providential role in certain instances of human transgression. Against Wolfson — but without reference to *Spec. Laws* 3.120–123 in particular — see Winston 1974–75 (=2001:135–50). It may be worth noting that John Calvin was also aware of the predeterministic implications of Exodus 21:13

A further rabbinic tradition, this one focused on the question of human life-spans, explicitly espouses a “type 2” compatibilism (*b. Yebamot* 49b–50a):⁶⁰

Concerning “the number of thy days I will fulfill” (את מספר ימך אמלא; Exod. 23:26), the tannaim are in disagreement. For it was taught: “The number of thy days I will fulfill,” refers to the years of the generations [i.e.: the span of life allotted to every human being at birth]. If one is worthy one is allowed to complete the full period; if unworthy, the number is reduced; so R. Akiba. But the Sages said: If one is worthy years are added to one’s life; if unworthy, the years of life are reduced. They said to R. Akiba: Behold, Scripture says [with regard to King Hezekiah], “And I will *add* unto your days fifteen years!” (2 Kings 20:6). He replied: The addition was made from his own [original allotment]. You may know [that this is so] since the prophet stood up and prophesied (1 Kings 13:2): “Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name,” while Manasseh [Hezekiah’s son, Josiah’s grandfather] had not yet been born!⁶¹ And the Rabbis? [How would they respond?] — Is it written “from Hezekiah”? It is surely written, “To the house of David” (1 Kings 13:2); he [Josiah] might be born either from Hezekiah or from any other person [of the House of David, but not necessarily from Hezekiah].

The dispute between R. Akiba and the rest of the sages concerns a rather minor matter. It is generally agreed here — perfectly in line with “type 2” compatibilism — that a person’s lifespan is generally predetermined but still changeable as a reward or punishment. What is disagreed is the

(*Institutes*, I.16.6; I.18.3), though his interpretation of the passage is more straightforward than that of Philo or *b. Yebamot*: God’s control extends to otherwise inexplicable accidents as well.

⁶⁰ The translation follows Soncino (ed. Epstein 1961), and the traditional printed edition, which has been compared to MS Vatican 111, available via the Online Treasury of Talmudic Manuscripts.

⁶¹ The argument here works as follows: Manasseh was born three years after his father Hezekiah’s illness (2 Kings 21:1). This, therefore, can be seen as support for R. Akiba: Hezekiah’s allotted years must have originally included his living long enough to father Manasseh — how else could a prophet living before Hezekiah have predicted the birth of Josiah (Manasseh’s grandson)? Therefore, Hezekiah was always intended to live long enough to father Manasseh; these years were first taken from him, and then restored, in accordance with R. Akiba’s view. According to the rabbis (in the concluding lines of the passage) it is the eventual birth of Josiah that is predetermined, not his being the grandson of Manasseh. Therefore, Josiah’s birth could have come about in another way, had Hezekiah’s additional years never been given to him.

relatively minor point of whether, as R. Akiba would have it, sinfulness leads to the reduction of years, or, as the sages would have it, virtue leads to the lengthening of years. What is also significant is the particular passage at the focus of the disagreement: the afore-mentioned nameless prophet's prediction of Josiah's rule in 1 Kings 13. While even Akiba here espouses "type 2" compatibilism in his allowance for the adjusting of predetermined life-spans, the rabbis' position goes further by understanding one of the most dramatic biblical illustrations of divine foreknowledge in light of a partial determinism. Yes, the unnamed prophet predicted Josiah's rule by name; but that does not mean that it was predetermined that Josiah would be born to Manasseh! Therefore, even the most specific of biblical prophecies becomes conditional or contingent, because the timing and mechanism of its fulfillment are not predetermined. So here too we find attributed to various rabbinic sages the view that only some events are predetermined; other events are brought about by human beings as a result of their free and unfettered decisions.

A third set of rabbinic traditions espouse a partial determinism in their discussions of human relationships (e.g., *b. Sotah* 2a):⁶²

Rabbah b. Bar Hanah said in the name of R. Yohanan: It is as difficult to pair them [married couples] as was the division of the Red Sea; as it is said, "God sets the solitary in families; He brings out the prisoners into prosperity" (Ps. 68:7). But it is not so; for Rab Judah has said in the name of Rab: Forty days before the creation of a child, a heavenly voice issues forth and proclaims, "the daughter of so-and-so is for so-and-so; the house of so-and-so is for so-and-so; the field of so-and-so is for so-and-so!" — There is no contradiction, the latter dictum referring to a first marriage and the former to a second marriage.

Once again, partial determinism is assumed in this tradition: the events discussed come about as a result of divine decisions (whether predetermined at birth or providentially guided in relation to people's natures and choices). Regardless, nothing is said that would suggest that *everything* is predetermined. Once again, it is significant that we can identify a parallel tradition among verifiably Second Temple period sources. The

⁶² Cf. *Mo'ed Qatan* 18b. The translation of *b. Sotah* 2a above follows Soncino and the traditional printed edition, which has been compared to MS Vatican 110, available via the Online Treasury of Talmudic Manuscripts; once again, the variants are not significant for our concerns.

idea that human relationships — at least the ones that work — are predetermined is also clearly articulated in Tobit 6:18, when the angel Raphael reassures the legitimately frightened Tobias with the words: “Do not be afraid, for she was set apart for you before the world was made.” It is very difficult to make the case that the book of Tobit otherwise articulates a completely deterministic view: the embedded wisdom speech (Tob. 4:5–19) certainly suggest that Tobias and everyone else has free and unfettered decisions to make. But human relationships — at least the important ones — may well be among those select events, like those predicted by prophets, that are predetermined.⁶³

It is important not to overemphasize the significance of the differences pointed out here between the two types of compatibilism. After lamenting the fact that few have noticed the difference between the two positions Josephus attributes to the Pharisees, Mason points out that the difference is not major, since all agree that the Pharisees balance fate and free will in some manner (Mason 1991:204–5). Nevertheless, because so much scholarship concerning fate and free will in ancient Judaism points out the parallels between Josephus’s Pharisees and rabbinic literature in a rather indiscriminate manner, surely something can be gained if scholarship were to begin to do so more precisely. This is especially the case when we also consider the various confusions traced above (section II) concerning the degree to which we find some elements of freedom or determinism among, respectively, Essenes or Sadducees. Indeed, even Mason has not quite characterized the two views adequately. Mason entertains the possibility that the account in *War* and *Antiquities* 18 (which we termed “type 1”) is essentially Stoic in nature, while the account in *Antiquities* 13 is more in line with the Jewish parallels. But as we have seen here, both Josephan accounts have Jewish analogues. And as we will see in the next section below, *neither*

⁶³ In my own experience teaching texts related to these themes, I find that most students instinctively think of themselves as libertarians, especially as far as their moral decisions are concerned (cf. Pink 2004:1–21). But when the discussion shifts from moral quandaries to human relationships, it is surprising to me how many students suddenly open their minds to a partial determinism. They do so when faced with the alternative that they were unaided by God in their romantic relationships. Partial determinism — what we are calling here “type 2” Jewish compatibilism — has not disappeared from Christian and Jewish heirs of the Pharisees, especially when it is understood in light of the ideas expressed in Tob. 6:18.

Josephus account of the Pharisaic view is really equivalent to the compatibilism of the Stoics.

The fact that Josephus fails to register the inconsistency could be understood to strengthen the arguments of those, like David Flusser, who argue that the ancient Jewish historian displays insufficient understanding of the philosophical debates (cf. Flusser 1963:327–29). But scholarship should be wary to jump in this direction, if only for the fact that most scholars have equally failed to perceive the very same inconsistency. Moreover, inconsistency and even contradiction may well be expected when it comes to compatibilism. To be sure, a number of important modern philosophers maintain “incompatibilism” — the philosophic position asserting that compatibilism is nonsense (see especially Inwagen 2003). If they are right — or even only partially right — we can hardly blame Josephus for misunderstanding or misrepresenting the paradoxes of compatibilism.

But one possible explanation for Josephus’s two-fold presentation of ancient Jewish compatibilism immediately presents itself: perhaps some Pharisaic thinkers — just like the later rabbis as well — explained the tension between determinism and free will in these two different ways. Tempting as it may be to attribute Josephus’s inconsistencies to his sources, his biases, or his misunderstandings, it could just as likely be the case that the tensions in Josephus’s account reflect tensions in Pharisaic thought. Indeed, the fact that the two different compromises between fate and free will are clearly in evidence both in Josephus’s description of the Pharisees as well as in the various rabbinic traditions we have discussed is itself a further significant parallel between them, this one, so far as I am aware, hitherto unnoticed.

V. Categorizing Compatibilisms 2: Jewish versus Stoic Compatibilism

a. *The Pharisees and the Stoics*

It is frequently noted and generally recognized that Josephus’s descriptions of the Jewish schools are colored by the use of Hellenistic — and especially Stoic — philosophical terms.⁶⁴ A number of studies go

⁶⁴ See especially Moore 1929, in comparison with Bobzien 1998a:16–58.

further to note and assess the specific parallels between the Pharisaic and Stoic compatibilisms.⁶⁵ But a review of the question is called for, not only in light of the observations and distinctions drawn above, but also in light of the fact that important developments have taken place in the study of Stoic determinism, such that we can accurately speak of a relatively new consensus concerning the state of Stoic determinism in the first century CE.⁶⁶

The study of Hellenistic philosophy is plagued by a number of problems, the most pressing of which concerns the fact that many key works are lost or only indirectly known from quotations in other sources. Regarding, however, Josephus's description of the three Jewish schools of thought concerning fate and free will, we are relatively fortunate in that we have preserved a number of works that can reasonably be assumed to be possible influences on and models for Josephus's discussion, including the writings of Cicero and Seneca. But it is Cicero's *On Fate* that is arguably the most important text for our concerns. First of all, we can safely assume that Cicero's work was well known and readily available in Rome in Josephus's day. Second, Cicero discusses Stoic determinism in a clear and sympathetic manner. Third, Cicero explicitly describes the determinism of the great Stoic philosopher Chrysippus as a mediating position between strict determinism on the one hand and absolute libertarianism on the other (*On Fate* 39).⁶⁷

I indeed see it like this. There were two opinions among the old philosophers; one held by those who judged that all things came about by fate, in such a way that fate imposed the force of necessity. This was the opinion of Democritus, Heraclitus, Empedocles and Aristotle. The other was the opinion of those who thought that there were voluntary movements of minds not involving fate at all. Chrysip-

⁶⁵ Flusser 1963 and Mason 1991:132–52. On the relationship between Josephus, his writings, and the fortunes of the Stoics in Rome see Haaland 2005.

⁶⁶ By many accounts, the truly pivotal work on Stoic determinism is Bobzien 1998a. For a briefer treatment (with praise for Bobzien's work) see Frede 2003. See also Salles 2005, and the earlier but still important treatment by Sharples (1986).

⁶⁷ Translation of Cicero here and below follows, with slight modifications, Sharples 1991. I have also consulted the LCL edition (Rackham 1948). For discussions of the passage, see Bobzien 1998a:316–17 and Sharples 1991:185–88. On this text as a possible background to Josephus's tripartite typology, see Penner 2001:15–17, who follows (and cites) Mason 2000:xxxi.

pus, like a respected arbitrator, seems to have wanted to strike a balance, but in fact inclines rather to those who want the movements of the mind to be free from necessity. However, by the expressions he uses he slips into difficulties such that he unwillingly supports the necessity of fate.

Other possible models for Josephus's typology have been presented from time to time.⁶⁸ And since we have only fragments of Hellenistic philosophy at our disposal, it may be foolhardy to try to identify the precise source from among our incomplete catalogue. Still the Cicero passage holds appeal at least as a representative sample of the tripartite fate and free will typology in circulation in Rome in Josephus's day.

Cicero's *On Fate* is also helpful for what it can tell us about Chrysippus's compatibilism. This is not the place for a full discussion,⁶⁹ but the following selection should prove instructive for our purposes (*On Fate* 42–43):

(42) ...but he [Chrysippus] goes back to his cylinder and cone; these cannot begin to move unless pushed, but, when this has happened, he thinks that for the rest it is by their own nature that the cylinder rolls and the cone moves in a circle.

(43) "As therefore," he says, "he who pushes a cylinder gives it the beginning of motion, but does not give it the power of rolling; so a sense-impression when it strikes will, it is true, impress and as it were stamp its appearance on the mind, but assenting will be in our power and, in the same way as was said in the case of the cylinder, it is pushed from outside but for the rest moves by its own force and nature..."

The cylinder and cone analogy is particularly helpful in explaining the precise nature of Chrysippus's compatibilism.⁷⁰ What the Stoic philosopher argues for here is a way of maintaining some semblance of moral responsibility without moving toward partial determinism or indeterminism. What is illustrated in the analogy is the way in which one's own nature bears partial responsibility for whatever events one is

⁶⁸ See, e.g., Pines 1977, against which see Flusser 1977.

⁶⁹ On Cicero's presentation of Stoic compatibilism, see Bobzien 1998a:236–38, 255–71.

⁷⁰ On the cylinder and cone analogy in Cicero and other ancient accounts, see Bobzien 1998a:257–71; Frede 2003:192–200; Salles 2005:39–49, and Sharples 1991: 191–93.

involved with, even though one is impelled to undertake these actions by outside forces. The push is the external stimulus; the spin or the roll of the cone or the cylinder is then determined by the nature of each object, in combination with the external push.

Stoic compatibilism in its Chrysippean form — as described by Cicero and other ancient writers, and as understood by modern writers including Susanne Bobzien, Dorothea Frede, and Ricardo Salles — is indeed much less attractive to most modern observers than it first appears, for while it allows some place for “what depends on us” (τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν; cf. Cicero, *On Fate*, 43 and Josephus *Ant.* 13.172, 18.13),⁷¹ it does not allow for the possibility that individuals have power to effect alternate outcomes — no more than a cylinder could spin or a cone roll. Free will is given a very small role in this scheme: individuals exercise their will when they assent to what they are driven to do, even though they remain powerless to do anything else. This is illustrated (and dramatized) in an oft-quoted *Hymn to Zeus*, attributed to the early Stoic sage Cleanthes of Assos, and quoted by Epictetus (*Enchiridion* 53):⁷²

Lead me Zeus and Destiny, wherever you have ordained for me.
For I shall follow unflinching.
But if I become bad and am unwilling, I shall follow none the less.

Needless to say, the discussion with regard to Stoic philosophy does not end with Cicero’s presentation of Chrysippus’s view, and readers can follow the subsequent peregrinations in the works of Susanne Bobzien.⁷³ But we can stop here, for this is where the discussion was in Josephus’s day. The Stoics were known for espousing a form of compatibilism. While their compromise position allowed some space to free will in theory, it was hardly a free will “worth wanting,” to borrow Daniel Dennett’s phrase.⁷⁴ If the Chrysippean compromise does not preserve a

⁷¹ On this phrase in Stoic thought — and how it differs from freedom — see Bobzien 1998a:276–90, 330–45.

⁷² Translation follows Long and Sedley 1987:386; cf. translation and discussion in Bobzien 1998a:346–51.

⁷³ Bobzien 1988a:358–412 and 1998b. Some aspects of Bobzien’s interpretation of the history of Stoic compatibilism are questioned by Salles 2005:69–89.

⁷⁴ See Dennett 1984:2 for this author’s memorable approach to Stoic compatibilism.

free will worth wanting, then it also falls short of a compatibilism worth bothering with. Indeed, for this very reason, Cicero was not far off when he remarked that Chrysippus (*On Fate* 39, quoted above): “slips into such difficulties that against his will he lends support to the necessity of fate.” Chrysippus was criticized by other subsequent ancient writers alike for just that reason: his compatibilism is, in the eyes of many ancient and modern observers, simply a re-articulation of determinism.⁷⁵

We can now see very clearly the differences between Stoic compatibilism as understood in Rome in Josephus’s day and what we referred to above as “type 2” Jewish compatibilism. The latter is akin to partial determinism, while the former remains a true determinism: whatever space given to free will is not allowed to detract from the given premise that all things are determined by antecedent causes. This is not to say, however, that Stoic compatibilism can be equated with what we referred to above as “type 1 (fusion)” Jewish compatibilism either.⁷⁶ That is because Chrysippus’s compatibilism does not countenance the possibility of alternate outcomes, or indeed allow free will any realm beyond what has already been determined. What we termed Jewish compatibilism “type 1” however, in both Josephan and rabbinic formulations, explicitly allows for alternate outcomes. As the rabbinic sources say, for example (*b. Mak.* 10b): “whichever direction a person chooses to go, they direct that one in that way.” Josephus’s Pharisees believe that, with regard to what is decided by persons, it depends on them whether they

Yet Dennett also has strong words (and arguments) against those, in his view, overly concerned with the question of whether one “could have done otherwise” (131–52).

⁷⁵ See, for instance, *On Human Nature* by Nemesius (bishop of Emesa), ch. 35 (105.6–106.13) quoted and discussed in Bobzien 1998a:358–70; see also 298–301 which pits Chrysippus’s compatibilism against modern philosophical objections, where it is found wanting. We have already mentioned Inwagen 2003, who argues that compatibilism is nonsense. A largely similar dispute is manifest in contemporary Christian theological discussions. As noted above, Feinberg (1986) articulates what he calls a “compatibilist” position while defending a Calvinist approach to predestination. Compare, however, the objections of Norman Geisler and Bruce Reichenbach, in their responses to Feinberg 1986 in Basinger and Basinger 1986:45–48 (Geisler), 49–55 (Reichenbach). Both maintain that the compatibilist position effectively denies any place for a meaningful degree of freedom.

⁷⁶ Here especially is where the present essay parts company with Mason 1991:203–5, 297, who equates the position Josephus attributes to the Pharisees in *War* 2 and *Ant.* 18 (“type 1”) with Chrysippean compatibilism.

do right things *or not* (τὸ μὲν πράττειν τὰ δίκαια καὶ μὴ). And it appears that Josephus is aware of this difference. In a less frequently noted passage (*Ant.* 16.397–398), the historian speaks philosophically of his own view on fate and responsibility, and here he asserts that all is brought about by fate, though human beings remain nonetheless responsible for what they are impelled to do. What is notable is that in this instance, Josephus does not assert that fate can be compatible with a freedom to do otherwise.⁷⁷ So perhaps the historian did indeed understand well the difference between the Pharisaic and Stoic positions.

A second important difference can also be identified between Chrysippus's compatibilism (and especially the cylinder and cone analogy) on the one hand and the various rabbinic sources on the other: while Stoic compatibilism focuses on human assent to external stimuli (as true determinism would require), the rabbinic sources categorized as "type 1" above tend to attribute the first move to the human being, with the assistance or opportunity being shaped *in response* by God. For example (*b. Shabbat* 104a): "If one comes to defile himself, he is given an opening; if one comes to cleanse himself, he is helped." So even type 1 compatibilism differs from the Chrysippean sort in a rather significant way.

While Susanne Bobzien does not discuss Josephus in any great detail in her masterful, lengthy treatment of Stoic determinism, the Jewish historian is mentioned in one single footnote in a rather striking way: "The earliest clearly two-sided concept of that which depends on us *in the context of the fate debate* that I have found so far is Josephus *Ant.* 13.172..." (Bobzien 1998a:398 n.87, italics original; cf. Sharples 1986:267–68). Indeed, an important thrust of Bobzien's work — one that influenced the preceding paragraphs of the present essay — is that the classic formulations of Stoic compatibilism do not address the questions that characterize what can be termed the "modern" fate versus free will predicament. The modern problem is the difficulty of squaring determinism with a free will that is truly "two-sided," which means that it allows for alternate outcomes. In Bobzien's reconstruction of the discussion, this changes in the late second century when Stoic philosophy

⁷⁷ On this passage and other parallels in Josephus's writings, see Mason 1991:140–42, and cf. 174–76. Josephus's affection for the Essenes is patently obvious to any reader of his accounts of this group.

encounters developments in Platonistic and Christian thought, and figures such as Philopator and Alexander of Aphrodisias respond accordingly.⁷⁸ There is an important lesson here for scholars of Josephus and Jewish free will debates: while the Jewish historian's discussion is undoubtedly shaped by Hellenistic terminology, it is in a number of important respects strikingly distinct from contemporary philosophic discussions of the matter, especially when it comes to the accounts of Pharisaic compatibilism as compared to Stoic views. The Pharisaic allowances for alternate outcomes and initial free human action — to say nothing of partial determinism — are not views that can be seen as characteristic of contemporary or earlier instances of Stoic deterministic thought. And there is an important corollary here that Bobzien did not have the opportunity to consider, but which could perhaps contribute to the discussion of the history of Stoic determinism. Instead of viewing Josephus simply as the exception that proves the rule, should we entertain the possibility that Josephus records the earliest — *Pharisaic* — attempt to accommodate Stoic determinism with a two-sided free will? After all, a two-sided free will is not only a Christian or Platonistic idea. It is, as we have seen throughout this essay, a thoroughly Jewish idea as well (see especially, once again, Sir. 15:11–20, quoted in section I above).

b. The Essenes as Compatibilists, For the Last Time?

Notwithstanding all that has been said regarding determinism and free will in the sectarian scrolls, it must be admitted here that it is not necessarily incorrect to refer to the Qumranic position as “compatibilist” (e.g., Duhaime 2000), or to compare Josephus's Essenes with Stoic determinism (e.g., Flusser 1963:326–29). Indeed, in a strict sense, the Qumranic/Essene position approximates Chrysippus's as described by Cicero, and as understood by contemporary scholars of Stoicism. The small room given to free will in either system may well indeed exclude the possibility of alternate outcomes even as moral responsibility is

⁷⁸) Bobzien 1998a:290–91, 300–1, 396–97, 411–12, and also 1998b. See also Salles 2005:78–81 who questions some aspects of Bobzien's account of this history. Salles (2005:63–68) also compares Stoic arguments (especially Chrysippus) with modern philosophic ones (especially Harry Frankfurt).

asserted nonetheless.⁷⁹ So the limited free will in these systems remains compatible with an absolute determinism.⁸⁰ Moreover, it ought also be noted that the Pharisaic and rabbinic position (especially type 2) is not, strictly speaking, compatibilist at all. By attributing some events to fate and others to free will, this position is really a partial determinism. In most philosophic contexts, compatibilism involves, by definition, not a partial determinism, but a complete determinism.⁸¹

So why then not refer to the sectarians as compatibilists? If we have accepted that Josephus likely was influenced by accounts of Chrysippean compatibilism, should we not apply the term to the group that most closely resembles that approach? I think we should not, and for the following reasons. First, Josephus clearly sees the Pharisaic position as the one advocating compromise. If, however, the term “compatibilism” is applied to the Qumran sect by virtue of their adoption of a position akin to Stoic determinism, then the term cannot be meaningfully applied at the same time to Josephus’s Pharisees or to the rabbinic sources surveyed above, which more explicitly advocate compromises. If the sectarians are the compatibilists, what term can we use to describe the Pharisaic position? A second problem emerges when we consider the fact that there is no known ancient Jewish group or text that advocated a stronger determinism than what we find at Qumran. If they

⁷⁹) This observation should not be understood to suggest that the sectarians were necessarily influenced by Stoicism in any direct way. Indeed, the likelihood of this is small, and the evidence to support such a claim is entirely lacking. See further Martone 2000. It is worth noting — along with Martone (2000:621) — that among Hellenistic philosophical schools, Stoicism stands out by the fact that so many of its major figures came from the eastern Mediterranean. See Sedley 2003:8–9. Quite possibly, then, Qumran and Stoicism were similarly influenced in their strict determinism by other eastern Mediterranean cultural influences, such as Babylonian astrology (see Martone 2000:621–22). For a more confident assertion of the influence of Hellenistic philosophy on Second Temple period Jews and Jewish literature, see Winston 1997 (=2001:11–34).

⁸⁰) Compare the similarly compatibilist positions taken in Feinberg 1986 and Roy 2006:13–25.

⁸¹) Although this point is rarely made explicitly, it emerges clearly from the definitions of determinism offered in many philosophic works (see n.1 above). For many philosophic discussions, both ancient and modern, if determinism is only partially true, then it is partially false, in which case determinism as generally defined is simply false.

were the most deterministic of Jews, what value is there in calling them compatibilists? Why refer to the most deterministic of Jews as compatibilists, especially when other groups were explicitly advocating a compromise position while they were not? Doing so would lead directly toward the problem we reached at the end of section II above — ancient Judaism as a hodge-podge of compatibilisms.

It is also imperative that we not give pride of place to Chrysippus's position when it comes to the larger question of defining and understanding compatibilism as an analytic term. As we noted above, his compromise position falls short of allowing for alternate outcomes. We could just as well state — in agreement with other ancient writers noted above — that neither Chrysippus nor the Dead Sea sectarians were true compatibilists in that they did not allow room for freedom to do anything more than assent to the predetermined plan.⁸² In this respect the Pharisaic and rabbinic approaches discussed above come closer to a real compatibilism than the positions of the Essenes, the Qumran sectarians, or even Chrysippus, in that the former struggle to maintain some semblance of determinism alongside a freedom to choose among real alternatives and even bring about different outcomes. Finally, it ought to be remembered that Josephus explicitly compared the Pharisees to the Stoics (*Life* 12). As Steve Mason reminds us (1991:155), Josephus knew much more about both the Pharisees and the Stoics than we do.

It is wiser, therefore, to follow Josephus's lead and view the Hellenistic philosophical debate as *analogous* to, but not precisely identical with, the theological disputes among ancient Jews. We are then free to use the term “determinism” to apply to the most determinist ancient Jews we can identify: the Essenes and their erstwhile compatriots, the Qumran sectarians. At the other end of the scale, we can meaningfully speak of the (relative) libertarianism of the Sadducees and Ben Sira. We can then meaningfully apply the term “compatibilism” to those ancient Jews who self-consciously articulated a compromise position, the Pharisees and the later rabbis. It is true that the range and contours of the philosophical debate are different from the theological one, for the ancient Jewish religious debate is hedged in at the extremes by various

⁸²) See the literature cited in n.75 above.

generally accepted ideas, such as prophecy, election and repentance. It is for this very reason that in section IV above we spoke of “*Jewish* compatibilism” which can then readily be distinguished from, even as it is also compared to, “Stoic” or “Chrysippean” compatibilism.

If we are to draw comparisons between Jewish theological and Hellenistic philosophical approaches, we can do so in only one of two ways. One would be to make the itemized, isolated comparison between, say, Chrysippus and the Qumran sect. But the more useful approach is to follow Josephus’s lead, and draw the structural analogy between the two tripartite debates, so that the Essenes, Pharisees, and Sadducees can indeed be instructively compared to (if not identified with) the determinists, compatibilists, and libertarians among the Hellenistic philosophical schools. Because it represents a compromise position, it may be inevitable for compatibilism to be appreciated (or decried) as a paradox. So perhaps it is appropriate that the usage of the term “compatibilism” in the context of ancient Judaism is also paradoxical: the term is most helpful analytically when it is used in a limited fashion, and with a certain degree of philosophical imprecision.

Conclusion

I hope this essay has by now clearly established that Josephus’s tripartite schema is supported in a great many respects by the range and diversity of positions articulated in ancient Jewish literature. This is especially true with regard to the Qumran scrolls, the Wisdom of Ben Sira, and rabbinic literature, where we find, respectively, very close analogues to the Essenes’ determinism and the Sadducees’ libertarianism, and also the two types of compatibilism Josephus attributes to the Pharisees. The assorted evidence regarding ancient Jewish disagreements concerning fate and free will proves, therefore, to be reasonably compatible. Josephus’s account remains exaggerated (especially at each extreme). It also falls short in the respect that Josephus chooses not to explain the ways in which the Hellenistic philosophic and Jewish theological debates differed. He also overlooks the difference between the two distinct compromise positions attributed to the Pharisees in his works. Finally, it ought to be noted once again that the historian hides neither his

affection for the deterministic Essenes nor his disdain for the libertarian Sadducees. So there is room to criticize Josephus for certain shortfalls both as a historian and as a philosopher.

But the criticism is, I think, frequently overdone on this matter. Instead of criticizing Josephus's tripartite typology as an example of apologetic fancy, biased historiography, or substandard philosophy, it might be better for modern historians of ancient Judaism to embrace Josephus's tripartite typology as an example of good pedagogy, which can as a matter of course require both simplification and the use of clear, but imprecise, analogies. Based on this standard, Josephus's typology can be praised highly. He has clearly, efficiently, sympathetically, and memorably schematized important debates among ancient Jews and translated them into terms (to say nothing of the language) understood by his Roman gentile readers. And he has done so with reasonable accuracy as well. As a historian of ancient Judaism, I hope to have contributed here to the efforts of elaborating what Josephus's simplification served in part to obscure. As a teacher of ancient Judaism, I hope that I have elaborated the ancient historian's typology with the clarity, efficiency, and sympathy that Josephus himself modeled. And I recognize that the entire exercise rests on a few short passages in Josephus's *oeuvre*. For a brief typology like Josephus's to remain a helpful guide for posterity is all any teacher can ask or hope for.⁸³

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Historio-Critical Hermeneutics in the Study of Women in Early Indian Buddhism

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Abstract

Modern scholarly study of women in early Indian Buddhism began over a hundred years ago, towards the end of the nineteenth century. In this article, I assess strategies that have been prominent in scholarly engagement with the texts from the period that are pertinent to this debate. The article is focused around discussion of four historical-critical hermeneutic strategies which either have figured within the debate or, as is the case in the final section, are suggested as pertinent to the debate. The four strategies are: a hermeneutics of resonance; gender-construct hermeneutics; comparativist hermeneutics; and finally revisionist hermeneutics. The first three comprise strategies which have featured significantly in the debate, from its origins to changes that have arisen particularly during the last two decades. The final strategy is, essentially, my own assertion.

Keywords

Early Buddhism, women, texts, hermeneutics

In this article, I look at four historical-critical hermeneutical strategies which have been, are or could be utilized in our assessment of early Buddhist texts concerned with women and issues of gender.¹ The four

¹) Although other evidence, such as archeological evidence and eyewitness accounts, are important for our assessment of sex and gender in early Indian Buddhism, the debate has been conducted largely through assessment of texts. Whilst certain scholars, particularly Gregory Schopen, have drawn our attention to the value of other sources, recourse to the epigraphic, archeological and other evidence has, unfortunately, figured infrequently in the debate.

strategies are: a hermeneutics of resonance; gender-construct hermeneutics; comparativist hermeneutics; and revisionist hermeneutics.² Hermeneutics is concerned with the construction of meaning within the relationship between author/text/reader, and whilst this is the overarching paradigm for the paper, there are shifts in focus between the different strategies discussed. The first section, hermeneutics of resonance, focuses on the author and construction of meaning within a particular historical-political milieu. The second section, gender-construct hermeneutics, looks at the relationship between author and text and the way in which the significance of the text is understood through a reading of female-as-construct, and how the notion of female-as-construct comes to be broadly applied to the tradition as a whole. The third section, comparativist hermeneutics, focuses on patterns of meaning drawn out from one text (and part of this is an examination of the way a group of texts come to be considered as one). Lastly, the section on revisionist strategies look at what “the text” has come to be for the debate on sex and gender in early Indian Buddhism and at certain readings of its significance that have come to dominate.

Hermeneutics of Resonance

I will begin with a prominent figure in the history of Buddhist studies scholarship in the west: Caroline Rhys Davids. I will discuss the hermeneutic of resonance in relation to Caroline Rhys Davids’ first article published in 1893.³ This was Caroline Rhys Davids’ very first article (published under her maiden name Foley). The year following the publication of this article saw Caroline Foley become Mrs Rhys Davids and, soon after her marriage she gave birth to three children and did not publish again for some time. In looking at the evidence from Caroline Rhys Davids’ diaries and personal correspondences, it seems clear

² A fifth strategy, hermeneutics of value, I omit here as I have discussed it previously. See Collett 2006.

³ Foley 1893. My discussion is focused on one period of Caroline Rhys Davids’ life. From her diaries and personal correspondences, it is evident that she goes through significant changes during her lifetime; from the youthful devout Christian to the emerging feminist and spiritual humanist, to wife and mother and, eventually, renowned scholar.

that Caroline Rhys Davids found her own values and aspirations, which reached beyond limitations placed on women by Victorian society, resonant with those of the early Buddhist nuns. As her diaries and letters make clear, Caroline Rhys Davids was an intelligent, independent and adventurous woman — she enjoyed travel, in particular mountaineering expeditions in the Alps, which is not an activity we might usually associate with Victorian “ladies.” Prior to her marriage to Thomas, Caroline Rhys Davids struggled with the very idea of marriage, acutely aware of the loss of freedom often suffered by women upon marriage. In a letter to Thomas, written a few weeks after his marriage proposal she writes of a conversation she had with Thomas’ mother elaborating in the letter on her own feelings about the institution of marriage:

She thinks I ought to go down on my knees and thank heaven . . . for a good man’s love . . .

And she looked quite severe when I suggested it was rather premature to hazard any such statements and thought me . . . without judgment when I maintained that married life would not easily form a compensation for what I was giving up.⁴

Caroline Rhys Davids makes clear what she believes she is giving up in another letter, in which she says, writing about her own mother:

But married life, both in her own life and that of all her sisters but one, has [not] resolved itself into something most worthy of the name, but rather into reckless, perpetual childbearing with of course much domestic management and the odious nothings called social duties thrown in.⁵

Although Caroline Rhys Davids did accept Thomas’ proposal, it was obviously with some reticence. This personal struggle of hers, to not be bound down and curtailed by a life of domesticity, Caroline Rhys Davids found reflected in the struggles for liberation of the *bhikkhunīs* in the *Therīgāthā* and *Therīgāthā* commentary, the *Paramatthadīpanī-therīgāthattḥakathā*, the subject of her article. Whilst it is of course apparent that the struggles for liberation in the *Therīgāthā* and *Therīgāthā*

⁴ Rhys Davids Family, Cambridge University Oriental Library Archive Collection (CUOLAC), RD T/21/4/1 letter dated 9th May 1894.

⁵ CUOLAC, RD T/21/4/1 letter dated 28th Feb. 1894.

commentary are of a different order to those that are the concern of western women at the time of first-wave feminism in Europe, nevertheless both are struggles and both have liberation as their goals. But it is in her universalising of her own idealisation of and definition of what it means to be an emancipated and liberated woman that Caroline Rhys Davids' political and intellectual affiliations come into play in her hermeneutics. On the level of theory, Caroline Rhys Davids' feminist engagement with the text can be seen as a liberal feminism fashioned after Western intellectualism. She writes,

Everywhere as women look, it is man imposing his own views, his own interests, and crying out at our selfishness if we carve out a little scope for ours.⁶

Caroline Rhys Davids, whilst she struggles to be accepted herself, idealizes the (theoretical) intellectual, independent women of Western intellectualism, and, in reading the stories of the women in the *Therīgāthā* commentary, women who renounce domesticity and their lives as wives and mothers, she extrapolates from the textual evidence and imagines them as, not just accepted into the early Buddhist male world of religious renunciation, but accepted as men's intellectual and rational equals. She imagines that, in the ancient dispensation of the Buddha, a figure she greatly admires, women became — as she wishes to be — considered as intellectually on a par with their male counterparts. Of the Indian female Buddhist renouncer in the *Therīgāthā* commentary, she writes:

...she... laid down all social prestige, all domestic success, as a mother, wife, daughter, queen, or housekeeper, and gained the austerer joys of an asexual rational being, walking with wise men in recognized intellectual equality on higher levels of thought... (Foley 1893:348)

Whilst it is true that some of the women described in the *Therīgāthā* commentary can be seen to engage their intellect in their religious endeavours, this is not so for each case recorded. As well as stories of women with highly developed intellect, there are other stories of particularly emotional women, alongside others which have recourse to

⁶ CUOLAC, RD T/21/4/1 letter dated 6th March 1894.

events we might call supernatural or supernormal. In the chapters on Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesā and Nanduttarā we find two instances of a story concerning a branch of a rose-apple tree.⁷ Both women are described as having left home to go forth as Jains. In each case, the woman proved herself to be in possession of a sharp, skilled intellect which enabled her to triumph in debate. In both cases, the point came at which each woman was so skilled in debate that they each put a standing rose-apple tree branch in the ground, near the village they are visiting, indicating their preparedness to debate with anyone who wanted to take up the challenge. Although in each case, these events took place prior to them joining the Buddhist community, it is easy to see how recounting of such stories in the *Therīgāthā* commentary caused Caroline Rhys Davids to consider women of early Buddhism to be “walking with wise men in recognized intellectual equality.”

In the above cases, it is not difficult to understand Caroline Rhys Davids’ suppositions about the women of the *Therīgāthā* commentary. In other instances, it is perhaps less obvious, such as with women who express a strong degree of emotionality (Kisāgotamī for example), or others who talk of or are described as (formally) obsessed with their own beauty, such as Khemā.⁸ However, it seems quite possible here that Caroline Rhys Davids saw the instances of religious realization and subsequent changes of behaviour in the developed narratives addressing such issues as the adoption of a kind of rationalism. For a reasoning feminist, learning to deal with life in ways other than conditioned emotionality, and learning to see beyond and live beyond societal obsessions with female beauty are simply natural and pragmatic inclinations.

As well as the above, the freedom from the domestic responsibilities expressed by the women of the *Therīgāthā* commentary appears to resonate strongly. The nuns do often speak of their release from domesticity as a freedom, and their expressions can be conflated with feminist concerns. A hermeneutic of resonance, in recognition of their struggle, reads into these stories of female renouncers, tales of sisters who have broken the chains of domesticity. Women who have redefined “the female” as agentive and non-domestic, have transcended the social construction of

⁷ See Pruitt 1997: Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesā 132–43 and Nanduttarā 114–17.

⁸ Pruitt 1997: Kisāgotamī 222–32 and Khemā 164–76.

“the female” and “domestic” as identical and/or interchangeable. And such a reading is not without substance. Although it is a religiously motivated separation of “woman” from “domestic,” nevertheless, with, historically, such a paucity of cases of such separation being made, the new woman embraced by, engendered by and indeed known because of early Buddhism is politically significant for feminists.

The apparent emphasis on intellect, along with the separation of the social construction of woman from roles of domesticity obviously resonates with Caroline Rhys Davids’ personal struggles, in this period of her life, to be an independent woman with little need for a man to support her, and little desire to be married and swallowed up by the duties incumbent in socially constructed female roles.

Gender-Construct Hermeneutics

This section begins the elucidation of a central dichotomy between, on the one hand, hermeneutics circumscribed around gender constructs and hermeneutics which focus on female experience, or the idea of female experience. This is a point I return to more fully in the final section. This section is concerned with the dynamic between author and text more concretely, both with regards to construction of meaning from the content of the text and, more implicitly than explicitly in this section, in relation to (more broadly) choice of texts to be studied.

Liz Wilson’s book *Charming Cadavers* focuses on representations of women in Post-Aśokan Buddhist hagiographic literature, although she does also make use of a broader range of texts, both early and Mahāyānist. Wilson argues that textual expressions concerning the female body demonstrate an intense misogyny meted out towards women, as women are viewed more as object/body than as subject/self. One example she uses is the story of one Śubhā from the *Therīgāthā* and *Therīgāthā* commentary in which Śubhā removes her eye to give it to a stranger who has become enamoured with her and does not listen when she attempts to teach him about the dangers of sensual pleasure. Wilson uses examples such as this story to highlight what she considers to be gender constructs which delimit women, their bodies (and body parts), as vile, decaying, septic, skeletal, carnal, or corpse-like. Other examples she

uses include rotting female corpses that are used as heuristic devices to teach (men) about the dangers of infatuation. Wilson's work can be situated within a sub-field of feminist studies which focuses on discourses and disclosures concerning the body as a measure of women's place within a community/culture/tradition. With regards to Śubhā, a story from the *Therīgāthā* commentary, rather than focusing here on the female as agent, Śubhā as an active participant in the narrative demonstrating to the youth who approaches her doctrinal teaching about worldly beauty, sensual pleasure and attachment (things the youth realizes as a result of her act), Wilson concentrates rather on female-as-construct and concept. Śubhā's removal of her own eye is a symbol of her deleterious relationship to her body/self. Śubhā represents the concept of the female, the construct of female-as-body/female-as-vile. Extraction of meaning from the text is cemented, by Wilson, around representation of women rather than around exposition of doctrine or dramatization of experience. Also, Wilson rather overemphasizes the apparent negative portrayals of women she finds and essentially extrapolates from her sources to construct an overarching view of women in early and medieval Buddhism that is one-sided and unbalanced. Wilson says, "it is always the man who sees and the woman who is seen, the man who speaks and the woman who is spoken about" (Wilson 1996:4). Countering this, the mere existence of the *Therīgāthā*, a text she uses, should in itself preclude such statements from being made about early Buddhism, leaving aside for a moment other texts in the same or a similar vein. Wilson also notes that her book

suggests that Buddhist women living in South Asia in the first millennium of the Common Era were subordinated to men not so much by rules that enshrine male privilege and circumscribe women's rights but representational practices that would make it difficult for a woman to imagine herself following in the footsteps of the highly revered Buddhist saints. (Wilson 1996:4)

Wilson's positioning of women as disenabled by the literature occludes the evidence of the broad range of available source materials that position some women, either through their status as disciples or nuns or by their communities, as capable, competent, and able to practice and attain high states of religiosity. In texts other than those studied by

Wilson, there is evidence that many women, in the early period at least, did indeed follow in the footsteps of the Buddha (even if not of later “Buddhist saints”).⁹

Serinity Young, in a similar vein, in her book *Courtesans and Tantric Consorts* (2004), suggests that certain descriptions of women in texts which recount the life story of the Buddha function to cast women as a synonym for the conditioned world.¹⁰ In discussing gender issues in the life story, Young can be positioned within an ongoing debate. Certain events within the life story have attracted the attention of feminists; particularly Prince Siddhārtha’s “abandoning” of his wife and child, and elements of the episode known as the eve of departure. In chapter one of her book, Young discusses the eve of departure. Young divides her discussion largely between Āśvaghoṣa’s *Buddhacarita* and the *Lalitavistāsūtra*. The eve of departure, in both texts, is focused around the women in the inner chambers (*antāpura*) or, as Young terms them, harem women. On the eve of his departure from the palace, in the *Buddhacarita*, Prince Siddhārtha is caused, by the gods, to see through the beauty of the harem women, who here function, argues Young, as an expression of the conditioned world; beautiful and seductive yet illusory and transient. The women fall asleep and fall into distorted and contorted poses, in which they reveal themselves to be in reality hideous and unsightly. In discussing this episode, Young notes that, “[w]hat began as a symbolic use of women to represent the worldly life and sexuality actually perpetuated the prevailing negative views about women...” (Young 2004:5). In accord with the crucial role of renunciation within the Buddhist tradition, the Buddha-to-be is portrayed several times in the life story as the quintessential renouncer. In turning away from his worldly life, the young prince renounces both his wife (and newborn) and the beautiful female artisans and dancers of his court. As Young notes, this appears primarily as an expression of the central doctrine of renunciation and “may have been meant to inspire men to imitate the Buddha and turn away from the average woman.”

⁹ See below for a list of texts which record accounts and stories of such women.

¹⁰ Young’s book is not primarily concerned with women in early Indian Buddhism, although she does, at certain points, discuss texts from this period. In the first part of chapter one she gives over some space to a discussion of Āśvaghoṣa’s *Buddhacarita*.

Although, she goes on to say, it “carried with it the seeds of a wholesale rejection of women” (Young 2004:5).

These seeds of the wholesale rejection of women, in texts that recount the life story, manifest, according to Young, in the way in which these events (as recorded in the texts) project attitudes and assumptions about women into the tradition which function to both perpetuate traditional societal negative views of women and engender what we might want to term a “Buddhist view of women.” According to Young, the “Buddha’s biographies use women’s bodies to represent that which opposes salvation” (Young 2004:8–9). Women are equated with sexuality, and seen as objects to the path of liberation, as they pull men back from the path. Women are equated with the conditioned world and not seen as subjects who are enabled to tread the path to liberation, but as hindrances to the male adept. Within this purview, texts such as the *Buddhacarita* function to promote disgust in the female body, and emphasize that Buddhist teachings are directed towards men.

Whilst there is undoubtedly some truth to Young’s claims, she rather tends to present the situation as bleaker than is actually the case. Perhaps obviously, other texts counter this “Buddhist view of women” as hindrances to the male on the path by recounting the lives and experiences of women who walked in the footsteps of the Buddha. To establish her point, Young talks at some length about the namelessness and facelessness of the harem women, and the impact of the promotion of woman as (unnamed) object rather than agentive subject. In a note, she quotes Mieke Bal who says that namelessness “eliminates them [the nameless ones] from the historical narrative as utterly forgettable” (Young 2004:18). However, although it is the case that in the *Buddhacarita* passage we do find a group of unnamed harem women, it is also the case that, from Indian Buddhist history we have extant the names of many women. For example, authorship is attributed, by name, to most of the *Therīgāthā* poems. There are extant forty apadānas which tell the stories of named female disciples of the Buddha. There are, in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, two lists of pre-eminent women, one of lay women and one of nuns, all of whom are named. The *Samyutta Nikāya* contains a chapter devoted to a group of nuns, again, each one of whom is named. The *Avadānaśataka* contains more than ten stories which have eponymous female protagonists. Thus, whilst it is the case that, on

some occasions, the literature does describe groups of unnamed women (and, incidentally, groups of unnamed men), this is certainly not always the case. The textual record holds the names of many women from early Buddhist history. While Wilson and Young aim to present their own findings, borne from the study of certain texts, as broadly applicable such broader application is not altogether appropriate. Indeed, the fact that so many texts bearing women's names have come down to us from Buddhist history is itself quite remarkable.

Comparativist Hermeneutics

This section deals with the generation of meaning through comparative analysis, which there has been, historically, rather a lack of. In this section I focus on vinaya literature. With regards to vinaya literature there has been a significant shift in the last two decades towards a more comparativist approach.

Although (usually the Pali) vinaya literature is perhaps the most referred to set of texts within the debate on early Indian Buddhism and gender, much of the work, until recently, was not comparative in nature. A significant amount of the writing on the vinaya in the field would be of the nature of assessing (or attempting to assess) the validity of the (Pali) passage on the *garudhammas/gurudharmas*, and its meaning for the debate. However, in these cases, the *garudhammas/gurudharmas* would usually be understood to be standard, that is, there was one list of eight special rules that applied to all potential nuns. However, both with regards to the *garudhammas/gurudharmas* and other sections of the vinaya which focus on rules for members of the female sangha, there is variation within the tradition, and this is something that has been coming to light more and more over the last two decades, through comparative work.

The 1970s and 1980s saw a resurgence of interest in the Buddhism and gender debate as a result of second-wave feminism. Certain scholars publishing in the field during this period, many of whom were feminists, approached the study of sex and gender in Buddhism from a broad interdisciplinary humanities background, which informed both theoretical perspectives and methodologies. This work appears to have been happening in isolation from the work of philologists and textual schol-

ars of Indic languages. As early as 1920, textual scholars would publish editions and translations, with comment, of nuns' vinaya texts, or fragments of such texts, from different traditions. However, those publishing in the field in the seventies and eighties would discuss the eight rules recorded in vinaya literature for nuns as if they were somewhat invariant. Nancy Auer Falk, for example, writes in 1989:

The monastic Rule became one of the most stable features of the Buddhist tradition: although Buddhism developed many different sects and sometimes very different interpretations of the Buddha's teaching, the provisions of the Rule remained basically constant. (Falk 1989:158–59)

Following this she introduces and records the eight rules for nuns from the Pali *Cullavagga* and presents them as *the* list rather than *a* list. She makes no mention of any variation to the list. Also, Rita Gross, in her book *Buddhism After Patriarchy* (1991), presents the eight rules as one constant list and she discusses the implications and ramifications of this list. In her footnote she does acknowledge that this is the list as it appears in the Pali and, as an alternative, she directs her reader to the list in “a Sanskrit vinaya” (Gross 1991:36 and 320 n.11).

The list in the Sanskrit vinaya that Gross points her reader to is Wilson's translation of Ridding's and la Vallée Poussin's edition of a Sanskrit fragment of a *bhikṣuṇī* vinaya text published in 1920.¹¹ Alongside this edition are other editions, sometimes with comment, which were published either prior to or during the seventies and eighties. These include Waldschmidt's publication of fragments of the *bhikṣuṇī* vinaya of the Sarvāstivādin school (1926), Gustav Roth's publication of a Sanskrit edition of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin *bhikṣuṇī* vinaya (1970), De Jong's “Notes on the *Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya* of the *Mahāsāṃghikas*” (1974) and Hirakawa's English translation of the Chinese Mahāsāṃghika *bhikṣuṇī* vinaya (1982).¹² Had those working in the humanities on Buddhism and gender been aware of this textual scholarship, their discussions could have been greatly enhanced by, for

¹¹ Ridding and la Vallée Poussin 1920. The translation is in Paul 1979:80–94.

¹² As well as these, published in Varanasi in 1984, was Kabilsingh's comparative study of nuns' *pātimokkhas*. This is both a translation and also includes some (feminist) analysis.

example, knowing that in Roth's Sanskrit edition of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin *bhikṣuṇī* vinaya (as he notes in his introduction) the section on Mahāprajāpatī and the eight *gurudharmas* is placed just before the nuns' *prātimokṣavibhaṅga*, not, as it is in the Pali vinaya, in a quite different section (Roth 1970:xxix). Also, the work of the theorists could have been augmented not only by broader knowledge of the eight special rules as expressed in other vinayas, but also by work on other aspects of vinaya literature. In a very short section of a longer article on the *prātimokṣa* published in the 1970s, Charles Prebish exposes potential variation of views about women through analysis of the variant use of one word within a rule. He highlights how the inclusion or exclusion of this word — *dṛṣtvā* — in expressions of the rule in different vinaya texts could suggest differing views about female *upāsikās* within four of the early Indian schools.¹³ In his discussion, which is detailed below,

¹³ Prebish 1974. Prebish's observation is as follows: "Coming now to the second topic, that of the *upāsikā*, we must examine the *anīyata dharmas*. Both of these rules are similar so I shall reproduce the critical passage only from the first. The translation for the Mahāsāṃghika and the Theravādin text is as follows: 'Whatever monk, should sit down with a woman, one with the other, in secret, on a concealed, convenient seat, and a trustworthy *upāsikā*, having seen that one should accuse him according to one or another of three dharmas: (either) with a *pārājika*, *saṃghāvaśeṣa*, or *pāyantika* dharma...' For the Sarvāstivādin and the Mūlasarvāstivādin versions, the gerund *dṛṣtvā*, 'having seen,' has been deleted, otherwise reading identically. The remainder of the rule in each version goes on to explain that the monk should be dealt with according to the dictate of the *upāsikā* in question. The intention of the rule is clear enough: the seat is convenient and suitable for sexual intercourse, and should the monk indulge, he is charged with a *pārājika dharma*; if he remains chaste, he is charged with one of the lesser offenses. However, the substance of this rule is not the issue on which we should focus our attention. The Buddha's publicly announced distrust of women is widely acknowledged, and that such a rule exists at all is truly remarkable. The key point is that in the Mahāsāṃghika and Theravādin versions, the *upāsikā*, no matter how trustworthy, must bring her charge only on the basis of personal, eyewitness testimony. Anything short of that seems not to be admitted as sufficient grounds for such an accusation. The Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin versions have nothing to say with regard to the offense being witnessed. The *upāsikā's* charge against the *bhikṣu* is accepted simply on the basis of her word, trustworthy though it may be, laying open the very real possibility of the admissibility of hearsay evidence, a notion strongly deprecated by the Buddha himself. Can the omission of *dṛṣtvā* in the versions noted be an oversight or error on the part of the respective compilers? Perhaps, but I think not. Rather, it seems to indicate, and further research will be necessary to validate this thesis, a gradual upgrading of the status of *upāsikās*, a process which puts considerable

Prebish argues that the exclusion of the word *dr̥ṣtvā* (“having seen”) in two of the vinayas suggest that the word of the female *upāsikā*, in these instances, is worth more. When *dr̥ṣtvā* is included, the *upāsikā* needs to have personally witnessed the event which appears as a transgression by the monk. The exclusion of the word suggests more trust in the word of the *upāsikā*; it does not matter whether she has seen the event or not, if she accuses a monk of such behaviour, her word is taken seriously.

Prebish’s observation of the variant use of one word and its potential implications for views of women demonstrates well the potential insights that can be gained from such analysis. Thus, the construction of meaning through comparative analysis that yield such potential fruits easily abates many of the primary concerns of those who, in the seventies, eighties and early nineties, aspired to challenge the perceived hegemony of the vinaya. The non-application of comparative hermeneutics, in this instance, contrary to the perceived desires of those publishing in the seventies and eighties, many of whom were feminists, resulted in a reinforcement of the very thing they sought to challenge- the authority and influence of the vinaya.

The last two decades have seen a renewal of interest in both *bhikkhunī/bhikṣuṇī* vinayas and in comparative study of them. From the nineties onwards, more work has been published that both makes some of the *bhikkhunī/bhikṣuṇī* vinaya literature available for the first time in European languages and includes detailed study and comparative analysis of the various vinayas.¹⁴ Such work includes, for example, comparisons between Pali and extant Sanskrit vinayas, as well as comparisons between Pali, Sanskrit and vinayas extant only in Chinese or Tibetan. Some are primarily translations with selected analysis, others focus on comparing vinayas of different schools, whilst others compare the rules for nuns with rules for monks. Two examples of such work are In Young Chung’s comparative study and Ann Heirman’s comprehensive and systematic translation of the Chinese Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇīvibhaṅga*. In Young

time between the finalization of the two sets of Prātimokṣa Sūtras: the Mahāsāṃghika and Theravādin being early and the Mūlasarvāstivādin and Sarvāstivādin being late” (176). This article re-appears more recently in Williams 2005:257–71.

¹⁴ Such work includes Nilot’s French translation of Roth’s edition of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin *bhikṣuṇī* vinaya (Nilot 1991) and Wijayaratna’s (1991), Hüsken’s (1997a and 1997b), Clarke’s (2000) and Shih’s (2000) comparative studies. Also see Kabilsingh (1991) and Tsomo (1996).

Chung, in a long article in the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, compares the Pali with the Chinese *prātimokṣa* (Chung 1999). In her article, Chung challenges assumptions about the *garudhammas/gurudharmas*. She begins with a review of views concerning the eight special rules for prospective nuns of those writers of the seventies and eighties mentioned above. In Young Chung consolidated the position of certain of these writers that the rules may have interpolated at some time during the history of the tradition giving reasons, borne out of her comparative study, that support the argument for interpolation. The most obvious reason for this assertion being that the *garudhammas/gurudharmas* mention the probationary period for noviciates wishing to join the Order, which had not come into effect during the life of the Buddha.

Heirmann, in her translation and accompanying study of the Chinese Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇīvibhaṅga*, by including partial comparison with other sets of *garudhammas/gurudharmas*, reveals something of the variation between traditions (Heirmann 2002). Heirmann's work is on the Dharmaguptaka vinaya translated from the Chinese. Heirmann records the eight rules as stated in the Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇīvibhaṅga*, and in endnotes records variation in the rules between different schools. For example, according to the Chinese Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇīvibhaṅga*, the third rule is as follows:

A *bhikṣuṇī* may not punish a *bhikṣu*, nor prevent him from joining the ceremonies of the order (such as the *poṣadha* or *pravāraṇa*). A *bhikṣuṇī* may not admonish a *bhikṣu*, whereas a *bhikṣu* may admonish a *bhikṣuṇī*. (Heirmann 2002:64)

Heirmann notes that this rule does not appear in other vinayas in this same form. She notes that the Pali vinaya, the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin and the Sarvāstivādin vinaya have the following variations:

Pali vinaya: “Nuns should ask for the date of the *poṣadha* ceremony; they should also ask the monks for instruction.”

Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin vinayas: “Nuns should not receive gifts before these gifts have been presented to the monks.”

Sarvāstivādin vinaya: “Nuns must ask the monks for instruction in *sūtra*, *vinaya* and *abhidharma*.”¹⁵

¹⁵ Heirmann 2002:96. For the Pali Vinaya, Heirmann uses Oldenberg's edition, and the translations by Rhys Davids and Oldenberg and Horner. For the Mahāsāṃghika-

Although this one example indicates a fair amount of difference between traditions, it must be noted that this is sometimes because the rules appear in a different order.

Chung's and Heirman's work provide examples of some of the profits of detailed comparative study. Although this is an area that in the last two decades has attracted the attention it deserves, there has not yet been a detailed comprehensive study of the implications for sex and gender in early Buddhism of the differences either within the content of the list of eight rules between Sanskrit, Pali and other versions and, more broadly (as highlighted by Prebish), of both minor and major variation within the vinaya literature concerned with women. Obviously more such analysis is needed, however, comparative study of this literature to date has certainly contributed greatly to advancing our understanding of women in early Indian Buddhism.

Revisionist Strategies

Hermeneutics per se, the construction of meaning and significance of the text, is conditioned by choice: the choice of which texts to study. That choice is itself conditioned by many other factors, one of which being the way meaning has been constructed around the idea of a text. Thus, if value has been accorded certain texts, and not others, this can affect the extent to which texts are studied. So this last section, then, is not simply about the hermeneutics of texts, but also about the construction of meaning, significance and value in relation to individual texts.

Affecting the choice of texts to be studied, we see emerging through the debate, as it proceeds over the last hundred or so years, the same issues that have affected our engagement with the Buddhist tradition more generally. Therefore, orientalism, the emphasis on Pali, Protestant-influenced perspectives, etc. are all party to and at times affecting which texts are chosen to be studied with the aim of contributing to the gender debate.¹⁶ Here, a taxonomy of value can be seen emerging

Lokottaravādins she uses Roth 1970 and the French translation by Nolot 1991 and for the Sarvāstivādin she uses the Chinese *Shih-sung Lu*.

¹⁶ For further discussion of the influences on the Buddhism and gender debate (pertaining to early Indian Buddhism) see Collett 2006.

by which some texts have been overvalued and other sidelined or ignored.¹⁷

The (Pali) vinaya and the *Therīgāthā* have, historically, received most attention, and became the textual centre of the debate. To date, there have been many books and articles on the *Therīgāthā*, both academic and popular, and, as we have seen, a great deal of work both specifically on the vinaya, and also discussion of the vinaya (particularly the Pali *Cullavagga*) has been central to the debate on sex and gender in early Indian Buddhism.¹⁸ In contrast, other texts have been either wholly or partially ignored. Apart for Caroline Rhys Davids' 1893 article, there are no others exclusively on the *Therīgāthā* commentary. Also from the nineteenth century, an article by Mabel Bode (1893), which is, in effect, a translation, prefaced by a short introduction, is the only writing on the lists of pre-eminent women in the *Āṅuttara Nikāya* which are expanded into stories of women's lives in the *Manorathapūraṇī*. There are no books or articles on the *bhikkhunī* chapter in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (although a brief introduction to the online translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi), only one on a story from the *Avadānaśataka* and one that is a partial discussion of certain of the women in the text, none on the stories of women in the *Divyāvadāna* and only two articles (one discursive article and one translation with an introduction) on one of the forty *bhikkhunī Apadānas* (Walters).¹⁹ As well, there are four general, more wide-ranging books on the debate (Horner, Gross, Wilson, Young).²⁰ Of the four books, Horner focuses on the Pali literature, Rita Gross does not confine herself to early Buddhism, Wilson concentrates on later hagiographic literature, and Serinity Young focuses in on the

¹⁷ My use of the word "texts" here needs to be understood to sometimes be referring to "sets of texts" and at other times to "sections of texts."

¹⁸ See for examples of discursive analysis on the *Therīgāthā*: Sharma 1977, Miller 1981, Lang 1986, Murcott 1993, Lienhard 1975, Rajapakse 1995, Ratwatte 1983, Blackstone 1998, and Banks Findly 2000; on the vinaya: Talim 1965, Falk 1974, Willis 1985, Shih 2000 and on both: Church 1975, Sharma 1978, Barnes 1987 and Falk 1989.

¹⁹ <http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma/nunsuttas>, Durt 2005, Skilling 2001a, and Walters 1994 and 1995.

²⁰ Horner 1930, Gross 1991, Wilson 1996, Young 2004. There are also articles such as Sponberg 1992 and Skilling 2001(a and b) which discuss a range of textual material, Sponberg focusing on Pali sources, and Skilling drawing from a range of sources.

theme of sexuality particularly in tantric and Tibetan Buddhism. Some of these lesser-known texts from the early Indian period are briefly discussed or referred to in the four books, however there remains an imbalance with regards to simply which texts have been studied.

Not only have certain texts, historically, been over-emphasised and over-studied but, alongside this, certain themes have also prevailed. Interestingly, although the vinaya and *Therīgāthā* have formed the textual centre of the debate, it is the attitudes to women of the vinaya that have prevailed on the level of theory. If we focus in with the vinaya on the infamous passages in the *Cullavagga*, as is most often done, these two centrepieces — the *Cullavagga* and *Therīgāthā* — could be presented as opposite ends of a spectrum, with regards to standpoint on gender. The Pali *Cullavagga* advances, in its present form, an undeniable subjugation of the female to the male, whilst the *Therīgāthā* must undoubtedly be read as the opposite, accounts of capable, independent women who attained to advanced states of religious experience within the dispensation of the Buddha. The *Cullavagga* is *comment about* women, and perhaps we can assume comment made by monks, the *Therīgāthā*, on the other hand, is, potentially, *women's own experience*.²¹ On the level of theory, the conceptualisation of a non-agentive, controlled and subjugated woman has prevailed historically in scholarly discourse on women in early Indian Buddhism, and this over and above arguments for agentive, active, religiously capable and adept women. When more agentive women are acknowledged, this has often been only with an accompanying understanding that women were allowed some freedoms within their confinement. That is, women existing under the overarching view of women as naturally of a lower order to men could and did exercise a certain degree of initiative and religious aptitude. Thus, the themes in the *Cullavagga* have prevailed, either as axiomatic or by being assumed to override other/lesser assertions. As a general trend, there has been more weight given over to *attitudes towards women* (and this most likely being male attitudes to women) than to *women's own experience* (or the recounting of women's own apparent experience). Not only has this been the case with regards to texts that

²¹) Blackstone makes a convincing argument for female authorship of the *Therīgāthā* in Blackstone 1998.

have been studied, but also certain of the texts mentioned above that (apparently) detail women's lives and female experience appear to have been sometimes passed over in the debate in favour of discussions of attitudes to women.

I will give an example of this through a brief look at the issue of female sexuality. A general theory of female sexuality seemingly encased in early Indian Buddhism is advanced along the lines that women are positioned as sexual predators, existing in their tempting and tempestuous forms to lure men away from the good path through their sometimes insatiable sexual appetites. Such a theory is advanced by Gross, in order to critique it, by Sponberg, in order to nuance it, and by Serinity Young, in order to develop it. However, what is found in the *Samyutta Nikāya* chapter on Buddhist nuns, by way of example, a chapter not mentioned by Gross, Sponberg or Young, countervails the prevailing view. In this chapter, Māra approaches certain women, and, on each occasion, the nun successfully “recognizes” Māra and defeats him. On three occasions, Māra tries to tempt the female through sexual seduction, either directly offering himself, or, as in these verses to Ālavikā, through exhortations to her to avail herself of life's pleasures whilst she is still able:

There is no escape from the world,
so what will you do with your solitude?
You should enjoy the delights of sensual pleasure,
do not be remorseful later.

And Ālavikā's terse reply begins:

Sensual pleasures are like sword stakes,
the aggregates the executioner's block.
What you call delight in sensual pleasure
has become non-delight for me.²²

In another story, Māra, disguised, approaches the nun Vijayā. He says to her:

²²) *Samyutta Nikāya* 5.1.162 *Natthi nissaraṇaṃ loke kiṃ vivekena kāhasi bhūṇjassu kāmaratiyo māhu pacchānutāpinī 'ti... sattisūlūpamā kāmā khandhāsaṃ adhikuṭṭanā yaṃ tvaṃ kāmaratiṃ brūsi aratī mayha sā ahū 'ti.*

You are young and beautiful,
and I a young man.
Come, noble woman, let us rejoice
with the music of a fivefold ensemble.

Vijayā begins her reply with these words:

Forms, sounds, tastes, scents, and tactile objects
that are pleasing to the mind,
I give them back to you, Māra,
I am not in need of them.²³

Within the Buddhism and gender debate there has been much discussion of the issue of female sexual seduction and of the portrayal of women as seductresses. We find many examples of women who try to seduce or lure men away from the path in the early literature. Perhaps the best-known example of this are the daughters of Māra who, according to many versions of the life story, attempt to seduce Prince Siddhārtha seated in meditation under the bodhi tree. Peppered throughout the literature are accounts of women using their “womanly wiles” (*itthikutta*) such as the wife of Vīra in the *Theragāthā* commentary, who initially attempts to lure him back from going forth, but is soon persuaded to go forth herself.²⁴ Also, we find many examples in the *Theragāthā* in which men position women as the snare of Māra, as temptresses attempting to seduce them away from their chosen path. As Lang summarizes of some such verses in the *Theragāthā*:

[Certain] verses share the same cluster of images: man as the hunted prey, Lord Death as the hunter, and a woman as the baited snare. Wife, dancer, or harlot- each woman is condemned in the same terms: “Lord Death’s Snare.” (Lang 1986:71)

Alongside this we see women also referring to themselves in these same terms. The former courtesan, Vimalā, for example, in the *Therīgāthā* describes her earlier life:

²³) *Samyutta Nikāya* 5.4.165 *Daharā tvaṃ rūpavatā abhañca daharo susu pañcaṅgikena turīyena eḥayyebhiramāmase ’ti... rūpā saddā rasā gandhā phoṭṭhabbā ca manoramā niyyatayāmi tuyheva māra nāhaṃ tenatthikā.*

²⁴) *Theragāthā* commentary as cited in Horner 1930:182.

Intoxicated because of my complexion, form, beauty and fame
 and proud due to my youth, I despised others.
 Having decorated this body, well painted, enticing fools,
 I stood at the brothel door as a hunter having laid out a snare.²⁵

In the *Therīgāthā* Vimalā is describes as a *gaṇikā*. *Gaṇikās* were the highest class of courtesans, often skilled in the arts, wealthy and able to set their fee so high that many could not afford them (Bhattacharjī 1987). Also, *gaṇikās* often had servants and would entertain kings. Despite Vimalā potentially having some control and certain freedoms within her life of sexual prostitution due to her status, nevertheless, she defined herself not in relation to her own sexuality, but in relation to that of her male clients. She is a temptress seeking to entrap men, essentially a manipulator; one who manipulates the sexual desires of the men she entices. In the *Therīgāthā* commentary, it is suggested that Vimalā is led to the view she expresses by the harsh teaching of an unnamed monk, who convinces her that the human body is nothing but a “heap of sores” and a “bag of dung” (Pruitt 1997:100–4). In the story, Vimalā, as the women in the examples above, is positioned as the quintessential female temptress, becoming enamoured with the monk, going to his dwelling place and attempting to seduce him.

Stephanie Jamison makes a convincing argument as to the socio-religious origins of the view of women as sexual aggressors within the Brahmanic tradition. Jamison suggests that such view arose as a resolution of tension born from conflicting expectations placed on the twice-born male. She argues that a system that expects males to actively uphold ascetic ideals whilst at the same time requires them to produce offspring generates consternation about male sexuality. She says:

The ideal situation for a man who has both goals is to practice his asceticism (an individual and private pursuit) *actively*, as it were, but to acquire sons from sexual activity in which he is a *passive* and accidental participant. Thus, this ideal male figure is the victim of sex, never seeking it or even welcoming it when it is offered. But, then, for sex to take place at all, we need an aggressor, and who is left? (Jamison 1996:16)

²⁵ *Therīgāthā* 5.2 *Mattā vaṇṇena rūpena sobhaggena yasena ca yobbanena cuppatthaddhā aññāsamatimaññiham vibhūsetvā imaṃ kāyaṃ sucittaṃ bālālaṇaṃ aṭṭhāsim vesidvāramhi luddo pāsamivodhiya.*

Whilst it may be the case that Jamison's insightful assertion for the unusual positioning of women as sexual aggressors within the ancient context of the Brahmanic tradition could be considered (more broadly) to have had some influence on the acceptance of such views within early Buddhism, it can be seen only as a general rule, to which there are obvious exceptions.²⁶

Within the context of early Buddhism, Sponberg notes that the positioning of women as sexual aggressors can be seen as an aspect of various views expressed about women, some more positive than others. He makes a case that the idea of women as sexual predators can be juxtaposed with other similar expressions pertaining to the monks wrestling with their abstention from engagement in sexual activity. He draws out this point with the following passage from the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*:

Monks, I see no other single form so enticing, so desirable, so intoxicating, so binding, so distracting, such a hindrance to winning the unsurpassed peace from effort . . . as a woman's form. Monks, whosoever clings to a woman's form — infatuated, greedy, fettered, enslaved, enthralled — for many a long day shall grieve, snared by the charms of a woman's form. . . .

Monks, a woman, even when going along, will stop to ensnare the heart of a man; whether standing, sitting, lying down, laughing, talking or singing, weeping, stricken or dying, a woman will stop to ensnare the heart of a man. . . . Verily, one may say of womanhood: it is wholly a snare of [the Tempter] Māra. (Sponberg 1992:20, translating *Āṅguttara Nikāya* III 67–68)

Sponberg draws out the nuances of difference between the two paragraphs, which he describes as “a move from psychological astuteness to psychopathological misogyny” (1992:20). Whilst the first paragraph situates the basis of the problem within the male psyche, and warns monks against becoming intoxicated, in the second paragraph, women themselves have become the problem; they have become (again) “the snare of Māra.” The *Samyutta Nikāya* verses, however, turn all this on its head. Far from women being themselves the snare of Māra, instead,

²⁶ This is the case both within Brahmanism and outside of it. For example, the condoning of sexual assault in the *Bṛhadāraṇyakaupaniṣad* dismisses the possibility of such a view as all encompassing. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyakaupaniṣad* it states that the best time to have sex with a woman is following her menses, and, if she is not amenable to it, that one should beat her with a stick or one's fists and overpower her. *Bṛhadāraṇyakaupaniṣad* 6.4.12.

Māra is himself attempting to ensnare them. In contrast to the general trends in the literature described above, in the *Samyutta Nikāya* Māra is representative of male sexuality, which is positioned as a potential danger for the women he approaches. Appealing to (what in the verses is portrayed as) their natural female sexual desire, Māra is attempting to seduce the nuns away from the good path. It could be argued that the verses are as they are because of the view of insatiable female sexuality, that is, women are sexual aggressors with voracious appetites and as such, in such a context, enticement to sexual pleasures would be a fitting ruse for Māra. However, this is in no way implied by the verses, especially as the women give such immediate and unremitting rebukes to “the evil one.” Instead, in an instance of the sort of similitude that would be expected under a purview of sexual equality, as the female form is seen as a snare of Māra for men, so a sexual male is a snare of Māra for women.

Engaging with a text that includes one of the rare examples of women’s experience of their own sexuality, rather than being concerned with how women stand in relation to male sexuality (whether this is expressed by men or women) can highlight otherwise occluded aspects of female experience. Ālavikā and Vijayā express their relationship to their own sexuality, a relationship which they seek — successfully — to transcend. Re-engaging, then, with the texts that highlight women’s experience adds, as this example shows, different dimensions to the debate.

This brief discussion of some of the verses of the *bhikkhuni-samyutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya* demonstrates how detailed study of the named women from the history of early Indian Buddhism can contribute to our understanding of women in early Indian Buddhism. A focus on female experience can enable a fleshing out and fuller envisaging of the women known of from early on in the modern scholarly debate, but not studied individually. Many of these women are mentioned by Horner, and stories of certain of them were published in translation by Bode over a hundred years ago. However, detailed and comparative study of their individual stories has yet to begin in earnest. Even the story of the well-known Dhammadinnā has received little attention. These stories, such as, for example, the story of Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesā provides grounds for further investigation.²⁷ Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesā’s story

²⁷ There are verses attributed to Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesā in the *Therīgāthā* (4.9) and her

challenges ideas about women's right to choose (outside of the *svayaṃvara*) whom they marry. Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesā demands that she is allowed to take the hand of a thief she becomes enamoured with, a wish granted by her parents. Secondly, the story reveals female initiate, in Bhaddā's outwitting of her husband as he attempts to rob her. Wise to his intention, she conspires to throw him off a cliff. Further to this, as mentioned earlier, Bhaddā later renounces the household life to go forth as a Jain, during which time she becomes highly skilled in debate. This aspect of her story is pertinent to the issue raised within the study of not only early Indian Buddhism but contemporaneous traditions as well; the issue of women's engagement in intellectual debate. Shifting attention to the, often detailed, accounts of the lives of these women, and by so doing drawing attention to (potentially) female experience can add new dimensions to the debate. A focus on texts which recount such stories can provide new ground for interpretation.

In conclusion, this article has attempted to present hermeneutical strategies that have been utilised in our engagement with issues of sex and gender in early Indian Buddhist texts and to suggest others for the future. Certain strategies are highlights with regards to one particular author, whilst others are advanced through a study of the relationship between author/text/reader, and, more broadly still, concerning the construction of meaning around texts. I conclude with revisionist strategies and on the advocacy of a shift in focus with regards to both texts that have been considered to be central to the debate on women in early Indian Buddhism and themes that have been considered as centrally important. Much good work has been done in the field, but there is still much more to be done, and it is certainly possible to write something more of a women's history from this period which has not, as yet, been done.

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Book Reviews

An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis. Edited by MOGENS HERMAN HANSEN AND THOMAS HEINE NIELSEN. An Investigation Conducted by the Copenhagen Polis Centre for the Danish National Research Foundation. Oxford: University Press, 2004. xv, 1396 pp. ISBN 0-19-814099-1.

Under the direction of M.H. Hansen, the *Copenhagen Polis Centre* discussed over the last decade basic questions pertaining to the *polis*, e.g., what is the Greek *polis*, how many of them existed at different time periods, what is *polis* religion? How did the Greeks themselves perceive their settlement patterns according to contemporary sources, in contrast to the modern notion of city-state (*Stadtstaat*)? Following a series of more than 14 volumes of conference papers and discussions, Hansen now presents the state of this extensive research (“a counteract against the Atheno-centric studies of the *polis*” (23)). The result is an impressive work combining the efforts of 49 international specialists. It consists of three parts: (1) the inventory, (2) the indices, and (3) the systematic introduction. (1) The inventory (ca. 1100 pages) lists 1035 *poleis* plus more than 500 settlements, which the ancient sources did not designate as a *polis*. It is organised in sections according to 46 regions or landscapes of mainland Greece, the Peloponnese, the islands, the Cyrenaica, Sicily and southern Italy, the shores of the Adriatic, and the Black Sea colonies. The entries of these regional chapters systematically summarize various kinds of information: the region as a whole, the settlements, the *poleis*, sizes of territories, adjacent *poleis* and memberships in coalitions, the pantheon and temples, political organisation, synoikismos (a number of settlements united into one *polis*), colonies, and the ‘lifespan’ and destruction of a *polis*. Since there are no maps added to these descriptions, one may consider to have the *Barrington Atlas* at hand (4 f).

(2) Extending over 150 pages, the indices provide an important mean to access the inventory: two alphabetic indexes are available in Latin as well as in Greek, subject indexes cover constitutions, deserted settlements, *polis*-divinities, temples, coins, Panhellenic victories, and the Hellenisation of the Mediterranean.

(3) The encyclopedia is accompanied by an introduction to deal with systematic questions and theories. A very precise section and bibliography deals with religion (130–35).

Hansen has given a comprehensive summary of his research.¹ In the time of Alexander the Great, he estimates, some 8–10 million people lived in Greek city-states (all over the Mediterranean). The *Inventory* challenges the opinion that the majority of ancient Greeks lived a rural life outside of *poleis*, and it calls for a reconsideration of the prevalence of a subsistence economy with little attention to long-distance trade. Unfortunately, he restricts his conclusions to the archaic and Classical periods, whereas the *polis* continued to shape the social patterns of Greek (and Roman) culture until the end of antiquity (10 f.).

Mischa Maier stated in a detailed review² that the *Inventory* is an indispensable tool for studying the fundamental category of Greek society and culture, the *polis*, and the comparison of religious organisations (e.g., as in Max Weber's *Die Stadt*, 1921).

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¹) *The Shotgun Method: The Demography of the Ancient Greek City-State Culture*, Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press 2006.

²) Mischa Meier: Review of Hansen / Nielsen (ed.): *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis*, in: *sehepunkte* 5 (2005), Nr. 10 [15.10.2005], URL: <http://www.sehepunkte.historicum.net/2005/10/7336.html> (download 13.06.2008).

Greek Sacred Law. A Collection of New Documents. Edited by ERAN LUPU. [NGSL] (RGRW 152). Leiden: Brill, 2005. xx, 504 pp; 34 figures on plates. ISBN: 9789004139596. € 137.00 / US\$ 204.00.

Several decennia after the collections of the *Leges Graecorum sacrae* [LGS] by Hans von Prott and Ludwig Ziehen (1896–1906) and particularly Franciszek Sokolowski: *Lois sacrées de l'Asie mineure* [LSAM] (1955), *Lois sacrées des cités grecques* [LSCG] (1969), and its Supplement [LSS] (1962), there has been an urgent need for a commented edition of Greek sacred law, since meanwhile, new evidence has been published. While Georges Rougemont's first part of the *Corpus des inscriptions de Delphes* focusses on Delphi only, Lupu's edition [NGSL] fills the remaining gap to present the new discoveries in every respect. He affords detailed descriptions of 27 inscriptions (stone, letters, date, finding location, earlier editions, excellent photos on plates) and a full Greek text edition followed by a translation. The interpretation assesses the nature of the text in the inscription and relates to comparable items, elucidates the local context, and closes with a line-by-line commentary. Since the printed text seeks to reproduce the layout of the original stone, the Greek characters are in some instances (e.g. 117–19, 178) extremely small. Discussing the sometimes very difficult readings — especially in the archaic Tiryns inscription (no. 6) — Lupu has consulted not only the available literature, but also some leading scholars in this thorny field.

The NGSL edition consolidates our knowledge about the principal new findings of inscriptions since the last generation of LSCG. There were already some preliminary texts and notes in the *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*; A. Chaniotes is providing on a yearly basis, in the reports of the journal *Kernos*, texts, short commentaries and indices for noteworthy inscriptions in the field of Ancient Religion. With the NGSL edition, we possess now a comprehensive commentary and systematic treatment of what has been learned through inscriptions found during the last thirty years since the last corpus was published. The NGSL edition will be a new corpus of reference to evaluate further findings reported in *SEG*.

In his introduction (3–112), Lupu treats the following subjects: sanctuary (entrance, protection, and dedications), cult officials, cult performance, funerary laws, cult finances, festivals, to finally sum up with the question: “What is a sacred law?” In his answer, he considers problems related to the lack of evidence. However, the nature of sacred law has to be discussed not as a merely formal category.¹ These questions remaining unsolved, the NGSL

¹ See Robert Parkers' critique in: E. M. Harris and L. Rubinstein (eds.), *The Law and*

nevertheless provides the texts, detailed commentaries, comparisons with other *leges sacrae*, and a discussion of the subjects related to sanctuaries, cult, and funerary regulations. It is a valuable tool for everyone interested in Greek religion.

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the Courts in Ancient Greece, London 2004, 57–70; see also his review of the NGLS in *Classical Review* 56 (2006) 380–84; cf. also the detailed analysis of J.-M. Carbon in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, URL: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/2005/2005-04-07.html> — visited July 3, 2008.

A History of Modern Tibet, vol. 2, The Calm before the Storm, 1951–1955.
By MELVYN C. GOLDSTEIN. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
639 pp. ISBN: 978-0-520-244941-7 (hbk.). US\$60.

By their power, they expelled them,
By their powerlessness, they were brought here.
Whether they are peaceful or violent
We shall see gradually.
(Lhasa street song, 1951, cited p. 170)

The popular uprising that occurred in Tibet in March 2008 brought the Tibetan question to the front pages of Western media. It was quite clear that the press's attempts to explain the historical background of this situation seldom escaped the tendency of offering merely a simplistic picture using a stereotyped representation of the factors involved.

In contrast to this common approach, Goldstein's studies on the history of modern Tibet, of which the first volume was published in 1989 (*A History of Modern Tibet, 1913–1951, The Demise of the Lamaist State*, Berkeley: University of California Press), provide a well documented and balanced picture of the political events in all their complexity, bringing a most wanted light to a period that has, for the most part, not been studied in depth. Goldstein avoids taking sides with either the "pro-Tibetan" or the "pro-Chinese school", sides in which, as he noted in the preface of the first volume, "impartiality often takes third place to polemical oratory and political expedience, with selected international events used in isolation to substantiate one position or the other" (xx). Further, Goldstein clearly shows in the volume under review the limitations of subscribing to stereotypic generalizations in terms of "the Tibetans" and "the Chinese." As he notes with regard to the 1950s: "In general, the period has been viewed simplistically as a confrontation in which *Tibetans* faced *Chinese Communists* in a showdown doomed to fail because the Chinese were intent on destroying Tibet" (xii). His study reveals however a much more complex situation: neither side is homogenous, and "[n]ot only did each side have significant internal factions representing conflicting points of views, but these internal factions allied themselves with factions on the opposite side, creating a far more complex situation than had been previously realized" (xii).

The present volume is a continuation of Goldstein's previous study (*The Demise of the Lamaist State*), which covered the years 1913 to 1951, including the capitulation of Tibet after the fall of Chamdo (Eastern Tibet) in October 1950, the signing of the Seventeen-Point Agreement, and the return of the

Dalai Lama to Lhasa. These events are treated more extensively in the first part of the present volume, which focuses on the years 1951–1955 and is planned as the first of a two-volume study on the 1950s. As Goldstein notes, “This Seventeen-Point Agreement dominates the history of the 1950s and even today continues to have an impact in Sino-Tibetan relations” (20). The first half of the 1950s is hence marked by the signing of the agreement — followed by the arrival in Lhasa of the first troops of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) — and the attempts to implement it. Goldstein describes these years as constituting the “high point in Sino-Tibetan cooperation and rapprochement” (xi), a period of relative calm “before the storm.” The years 1955 to 1959, which will be the subject of the forthcoming volume, see indeed a decline in Sino-Tibetan relations, leading to the uprising of 1959 and the flight of the Dalai Lama into exile.

The present volume introduces the events chronologically in 22 chapters organized in three parts:

Part one, “The Road to a Sino-Tibetan Agreement” (19–165), describes the first interactions between the new Chinese Communist government and Tibet, and the indecision of an “ill-prepared and weak Tibetan government” (20) concerning the course of action to follow. It discloses the Chinese efforts to present Tibet’s “liberation” as both attractive (the Seventeen-Point Agreement offered Tibet special conditions and promised a gradual implementation of reforms) and inevitable (that it would be, if necessary, realized through a full-scale military invasion). This section is also revealing as to how few alternatives were left to Tibet after the disappointment of its failed appeal to the United Nations and the absence of positive feedback from Britain or the United States. Although the United States did expend a certain amount of effort to persuade the Dalai Lama to flee Tibet, their offer was never committed enough to match what looked at the time to be the most reasonable option — negotiating and collaborating with the Chinese under the terms of the Seventeen-Point Agreement, which appeared to grant Tibet the preservation of its social and religious institutions.

Part two, “The First Two Years: Confrontation and Adjustment” (169–396), examines how both sides experienced the first contacts and implementation of the Seventeen-Point Agreement. Goldstein describes the relations between the first Chinese officials in Lhasa and the Tibetan government, whose members’ attitudes ranged from overt opposition to good-willed collaboration. The main event in this period was the arrival of the PLA in Lhasa, whose presence caused strained relations with the population and generated a serious food crisis. The years 1951 and 1952 saw important changes in political organization,

with the removal of the two *sitsab* (*srid tshab*) Lukhangwa and Lobsang Tashi (who had been appointed head of the government while the 14th Dalai Lama was in Yadong and had remained in office after his return in 1951), the growing involvement of the Dalai Lama in political matters, and the emergence of the people's voice through the newly created — but soon banned — Tibetan People's Association. In 1952 the Panchen Lama returned to Tibet and tentative steps were taken to settle the opposition between the partisans of the two lamas; the latter reveals the conflicts between Chinese officials concerning the strategy for implementing the Seventeen-Point Agreement and the role the Panchen was to play thereby. Here, Mao Zedong clearly imposed his idea of keeping Tibet unified under the Dalai Lama. At the end of this first period, during which it had been attempted to apply a "gradual implementation policy," Mao and the Central Committee in Beijing took direct administrative control over Tibet.

Part three, "Cooperation and Change" (399–549), describes the first steps taken towards reforms, with, among other things, the founding of schools. While outside Tibet an exile resistance group was formed, which held discussions with the United States concerning the possibility of the Dalai Lama fleeing occupied Tibet, in Tibet, Mao's moderate gradualist strategy inspired optimism among some of the elite, and the Dalai Lama accepted Mao's invitation to Beijing. Mao's project to win over the Dalai Lama to the communist ideology seems to have succeeded; in spite of a slight uneasiness in reaction to Mao's passing remark that "religion is poison" (521), the Dalai Lama came back to Lhasa enthusiastic about the prospect of modernizing Tibet. Whereas not all Chinese cadres accepted this attitude as genuine (535), the Central Committee felt for its part that the Dalai Lama had to be warned to be cautious and not to proceed too quickly in the implementation of reforms (528).

As in the first volume of his *History of Modern Tibet*, Goldstein makes use of a variety of sources: 1. primary material consisting of those government records and documents that are available or have been made available (Goldstein comments on the difficulties of obtaining access to government records from the US, India and China), 2. oral historical data gathered in interviews with over one hundred persons in China, India, Nepal, England, and North America, 3. restricted circulation publications from China (publications not available to the general public or that have been withdrawn from circulation) that include citations from documents, telegrams, etc., 4. firsthand memoir accounts by Chinese and Tibetans that have been published in China and India, as well as, demonstrated by the extensive list of references (583–604), 5. a rich range of newspapers, books, and articles.

Goldstein often cites the contents of the documents in full. The reader is thus provided access to a wide array of key-material, not only agreements and

edicts, but also government reports and telegrams that are strikingly explicit, as for example numerous telegrams conveying Mao's strategic instructions to the Chinese cadres in Tibet, the British Foreign Office's analysis of Tibet's identity as a "state" (64f.), or the evaluation, by the US State Department's Office of Far Eastern Affairs, of the pros and the cons in shifting strategies in favour of supporting Tibet's independence (115–118).

The use of memoirs and interviews allows Goldstein to give descriptions of the same incident from different perspectives and brings the reader closer to the actors and spectators in the events of this period. Goldstein raises the issue of how this kind of account should be evaluated, and the need to verify them through other interviews and sources if available. Many of those records are from government officials and their families, but Goldstein also lets us hear the voice of soldiers, teachers, monks, etc., who comment on their recollections of the situation.

Goldstein highlights not only the role of individuals in the events of this period (for instance Mao's personal engagement in the Tibetan issue; the efforts of Ngabö, a leading progressive minister of the Kashag, to promote cooperation with the Chinese cadres in Tibet; the actions of the members of the Dalai Lama's family, etc.), but also their personalities and attitudes, which were not without consequence on the course of history; one can consider in this regard, for instance, the accounts of the sitsab Lukhangwa expressing his anger at the Chinese officials in a manner that even his fellow members of the Tibetan government considered going "beyond any norm of acceptable Tibetan aristocratic behavior" (208). A number of photos reproduced in this volume contribute to familiarizing the reader with the important figures of this period.

In addition to these treasures of oral history, Goldstein quotes a number of street songs that convey, for example, the people's apprehension on the arrival of the Chinese communists, their criticism of the Tibetan government for letting the Chinese enter Tibet (170–171), and for the government's later helping them out of greed (263), etc. These satiric songs, a type of secular poetry, were not officially permitted, as in Tibet political criticism was illegal. Goldstein explains: "Tibetan politics traditionally was the prerogative of a tiny elite of lay (aristocratic) and monk officials. There was no notion of popular democracy — no political parties and no freedom of political expression. Public opposition to the government or its policies was not permitted" (314). This situation changed in the early 1950s with the emergence of the Tibetan People's Association.

Most of the events dealt with in this book revolve around Lhasa — the seat of the Tibetan government and the site where the Chinese officials took up residence in Tibet — and Beijing, where the signing of the Seventeen-Point

Agreement and the 1954–1955 visit of the Dalai Lama took place. Goldstein strives to give us a complete picture of the different factions in the Chinese and Tibetan governments and their respective motives. He also very clearly presents the attitudes and motivations of neighbouring countries such as India, as well as the international stand on the Tibetan situation. In particular, Goldstein sheds light on the US-Tibetan dialogue during this period, showing how the Tibetan informers/negotiators (among whom were members of the Dalai Lama's family) not only talked in the Dalai Lama's name without his knowledge, but also conveyed a picture of Tibetan events that to some extent contrasted both with the actual situation in Tibet and the plans of the Tibetan government. Goldstein notes that "[s]uch misinformation about events in Tibet was to become a constant component of the history of the 1950s. At this time, it should be noted that the CIA had no officers who spoke Tibetan and had no agents in Tibet, so they had no independent sources of information" (240).

Regarding the issue of language, Goldstein shows how it played a role in several contexts, in particular in the translation of some Chinese key-terms found in the Seventeen-Point Agreement, namely, "autonomy" (translated as "self rule" [*rang skyong*]), and "central/local government" (the first being rendered by a phonetic equivalent of the Chinese *zhongyang*, which the Tibetans took to mean "China", and the second being translated as "government of an area" [*sa gnas srid gzhung*]) (101). Thus, for instance, the Dalai Lama commented on his reaction to Mao's recommendation in 1954 to create the Tibet Autonomous Region by remarking, "To us, it seemed that the very name Tibet Autonomous Region [tib. Pö rang-gyong jong, which in Tibetan literally means "Tibet, a region ruled by itself"] was much nicer than the Military-Administrative Committee, so we appreciated this and promptly agreed..." (498).

Further, the role of translators in oral communications is also mentioned. Goldstein describes, for instance, the meeting of Wang Yimei (the commander of the first PLA troop entering Lhasa) with the Tibetan government, during which the translator, Tarchin, purposely toned down the verbal attacks of the sitsab Lukhangwa. Tarchin, scolded later by the Tibetan cadre Phüntso Wangye, who told him that "in the future he should not change what people said; he had to translate exactly," explained that "he knew that he should do that but feared that if he had translated correctly, both of them might have gotten very angry and it might have created a serious incident" (209).

Questions of language will however not hinder non-specialists in the reading of this book: all the documents presented have been translated into English, and Tibetan words — both proper names and common words — are in

phonetic transcription; a table of equivalence with the correct Tibetan spellings is given at the end of the volume. One finds, at the beginning of the volume, a glossary for “technical” terms and the key persons involved in the events of this period. The social situation in Tibet before its incorporation into China is clearly presented in the introduction.

This book is a wonderful in-depth study of this period. It takes us beyond myths and stereotypes to the actual facts, which are richly documented. Thanks to the wide range of materials included in their entirety, it also constitutes a valuable reference book, complemented by a well-designed index. Readers who are more interested in an overview of Sino-Tibetan relations might find this book too voluminous, and perhaps they should turn to the Goldstein’s shorter *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama* (Berkeley, 1997: University of California Press). Nevertheless, the detailed and comprehensive narrative offered in the volumes of *A History of Modern Tibet* is to be recommended not only for scholars and students of Tibetan history and culture, but also for the wider public interested in getting first hand information and an objective account of the events of this era in the history of modern Tibet, a time crucial with regard to its interaction with the Chinese government, as well as being a transitional period for Tibetan society.

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Integrative Religious Education in Europe. A Study-of-Religions Approach. By WANDA ALBERTS. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007. 442 pp. ISBN 978-3-11-019661-0.

The Study of Wanda Alberts provides a detailed analysis of different approaches to Religious Education (RE) in England and Sweden as well as an emphatic recommendation for what the author calls integrative RE — a non-confessional, impartial, study-of-religions-based approach to religions at school.

The notion of ‘Integrative RE’ serves as a platform to include any concept of how to deal with the plurality of religions in schools. Therefore it is plausible to concentrate on the English and Swedish context, where these questions have been discussed for years. The author is familiar with the situation in these countries holding in mind other European examples. This leads to a well-informed and very helpful overview of the most interesting models and theories of RE in Europe.

The main section of the study is an analytical part, which is introduced by a solid description of the local “history and organisation of integrative RE” (86–110). For England there are nine current approaches to RE presented (111–210): The “Westhill Project”, “A Gift to the Child”, the “Experiential Approach”, the “Interpretative Approach”, the “Critical Approach”, the “Constructivist Approach”, the “Narrative Approach”, the “Chichester Project”, and the “Stapleford Project” (the last two have been developed for the teaching of Christianity).

The most elaborated and also the most favoured by the author is the ‘Interpretative Approach’, developed by Robert Jackson in the ‘Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit’. Children first require “a development of interpretive skills, which are necessary for the kind of understanding attempted.” Understanding gives rise to “the deepening of one’s self-understanding by studying other world-views edification, a new perspective on the familiar as a result of a study of the unfamiliar.” (143)

Each English approach as well as the Swedish one (211–289), is scrutinized for the underlying concept of religion and notion of education. This analytical structure answers to the two academic disciplines which are significant for integrative RE: study of religions and educational theory; at the beginning of the book, the reader is introduced to these two disciplines (8–85). In the Interpretative Approach for example, the concept of religion derives from a critical reading of phenomenology, combined with principles of the interpretative anthropology from Clifford Geertz and ideas of Wilfred Cantwell Smith. (144)

The author discusses the findings (290–311) in the wider European context: Regarding Alberts it is not useful to follow the famous taxonomy,

“education into religion”, “education about religion”, and “education from religion”. It is remarkable that her construction of a classification does not start from the empirical findings themselves but from a summary of different European solutions. The systematic question of how integrative RE is realised leads to three possibilities (324): “integrative RE as an individual subject” (example Norway and one can add: England and Sweden), “teaching about different religions in separative confessional or ‘alternative’ subjects” (Germany), and “inclusion of aspects of integrative RE in other parts of the curriculum” as a “learning dimension” (Netherlands).

However, towards the end of the study Alberts formulates more and more normative decisions, when she gives her own ideas of how religion should be taught in European (public?) schools. In this sense the climax of the book is the last part. This “framework for integrative RE in Europe” (353–388) is based on a “non-religious profile” (355) and a theory of critical citizenship education. It claims to be a “general educationally consistent model which may be modified [...] in the individual countries” to “ensure that all pupils in Europe learn about religious plurality” (353).

Both the descriptive and the normative aspects of this courageous study contribute remarkably to the contemporary discussion: The study provides clear orientation in the field of RE in England and Sweden with further information about Norway, Germany and The Netherlands. The academic study of religions often has — I agree with Alberts — difficulties in serving for practical interests; one can take a look at what has already happened to some of the theories.

Naturally the normative proposition may provoke more opposition, especially from the academic study of religions. For example, Alberts advocates an individual compulsory school RE subject, and rejects to combine integrative RE with other subjects. In my experience Swiss educationalists at the moment are vividly discussing subject groups, which are including better established subjects such as biology, geography, and history etc. These are debates dependent on fashions as well as on financial questions. It might be unrealistic to insist on an independent subject. In some parts of the book, especially towards the end, Alberts argues rather idealistically.

The advantage of the book is that Alberts strengthens and encourages emphatically the discipline study of religions; this is honourable and absolutely necessary in the actual situation. Therefore she adopts a very critical attitude against Christian theology — but she is less suspicious about educational theory.

The irritating point of the study for the academic study of religions is the educational foundation. The educational part is prominently expressed when

Alberts identifies the “major challenge” as “finding ways of bridging the two dimensions of the subject: the descriptive dimension [...] and the existential dimension” (307). Most scholars of study of religions would not accept that sort of “challenge” at the university. But is it nonetheless a necessary challenge at school? Whereas all theological claims to enrich pupils’ personalities are strictly disapproved by Alberts, the educational care for the existential dimension is protected and put as a challenge. “The distinction between these two dimensions is perhaps the main difference between the academic study of religions [...] and concepts for integrative RE” (359).

The introduction to the two disciplines at the very beginning does not fulfil the reader’s expectations as an opening explication of method or theoretical presuppositions for the following analysis. Instead the disciplines are presented because of their contribution to integrative RE. Therefore, I would have preferred a placing before the new “framework of RE” because the sketch of study of religions is not exactly what the protagonists of the nine presented approaches deal with. The descriptive, presented frameworks are nearly all directed from an educational scientific context. Their advocates for the scientific discussion of religion are scholars such as Wilfred Cantwell Smith, John Hick, Ninan Smart (112), Alister Hardy (130), or Rudolf Otto (125). Alberts does very well in criticising these concepts.

An exception is the ‘Interpretative Approach’ by Robert Jackson (142–162), who shows the most intensive reception of modern study of religions and the criticism of phenomenology. Here we can find authors like Clifford Geertz and Jacques Waardenburg. The Swedish discussion is more elaborate too. But in both cases, educational principles have gained a powerful influence, and many study-of-religions scholars would not be able to recognize their discipline.

The strange placement of the introduction abets the misunderstanding that the actual state of the art is fully considered in educational debates on RE. Though the introduction of the discipline shows what Alberts wants the basis for integrative RE to be, it actually doesn’t.

The methodological frame of study of religions itself — the subject I am more familiar with than educational theory — is a contested field. Alberts presents a remarkable summary with a slightly Marburg-centred view. From the beginning she gives a hand to educational application. Important research fields, which are less relevant for classroom teaching, are omitted, for example cognitive theory. It’s a pity that there is no reference to the field of geography and religion, which is highly relevant for RE — maybe the threat of a subject group geography-religion has influenced the author. Taking into account that one cannot expect every nuance in a 40-page introduction, we must consider

the function of the part of the book: The presentation of study of religions seems to be written for educationalists and vice versa.

To sum up: It is not a historical or empirical study from the bottom up, but a necessary one. The study relies on a bridge between the study of religions and educational theory; therefore it may be attacked from both sides. It is not easy to venture out between two disciplines. Nevertheless, Alberts has raised the central question of how a fair study-of-religions representation of religions may be accommodated (and transformed!) within educational theory.

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A Companion to Roman Religion. Edited by JÖRG RÜPKE. Malden, MA/Oxford/Carlton: Blackwell, 2007. ISBN 978-1-4051-2943-5.

The new Companion to Roman Religion aims to offer a comprehensive overview of Roman religion throughout the history of Rome until the late fourth century C.E.

Two introductory essays map the field: the first defines and outlines “Roman religion,” while the second focuses on the scholarly treatment of Roman religion from Roman times up to the present. The other contributions are arranged in six parts. The first part, “Changes,” describes successive phases of Roman religion, from archaic Rome to the struggles of the fourth century C.E., the second concentrates on “Media,” while the third discusses different “Symbols and Practices” and the fourth is dedicated to “Actors and Actions.” The fifth deals with “Different Religious Identities,” whereas the final part presents “Roman Religion Outside and Seen from Outside.”

The theoretical and methodological framework is outlined in the first introductory essay: religion is defined as “human actions and communication” undertaken “on the presupposition that gods existed who were part of one’s social and political group” (6–7). Nevertheless, the book decides against including a chapter on gods (7), and instead proposes to concentrate on different media, through which gods were represented and defined. The second methodological decision is to focus not on “cults,” but on the religious actors and their “wide spectrum of religious groups or options” (7). This emphasis on the dynamic aspect of the negotiation and construction of religion is an important corrective to overly static and schematic views of pagan religious traditions.

The historical overview (“Changes”) consists of a stringent series of articles, each highlighting a phase of Roman history and discussing in detail the problems of sources, the socio-political context of religion, the impact of social and political change on religion and the use of religion as a response hereto. The definition of “Romanness” in the later republic as well as the emergence of a new common religious language in the 2nd century C.E., which continues well into the 4th century despite the struggles of different religious groups, are part of this picture. Perhaps the emergence of a common religious language is too strongly emphasised as a Roman imperial development in both the Eastern and the Western parts of the empire; the Hellenistic precedents tend to be downplayed. The religious variety in the 4th century and the imperial interventions in religious matters are highlighted, as are the gradual development of a new — Christian — religious *koine* and the increasing importance of the episcopal authority.

The second part takes up some selected media through which religious contents are constructed and represented. The first is literature, represented by an analysis of the varying modes to construct a Roman history of Roman religion in historiography and epic. A chapter is devoted to religious imagery on Roman coins, describing the different motifs and discussing the lasting presence and prominence of religious designs on coins as an indicator for the importance of religion for Roman civic identity (163). The religious themes of public and private reliefs are outlined without systematic discussion. Different types of inscriptions are also briefly reviewed as the most important non-literary source of knowledge about Roman religion, that is, as a medium for the scholar, not as a medium for interaction between Roman religious actors. Some considerations about the different intentions of different types of inscriptions, e. g. about the performative character of the curse tablets, which distinguishes them from calendars or tomb inscriptions, would have been interesting. The last medium discussed in this part is the domestic space — wall paintings, mosaics, sculpture, silverware and ceramics. An important finding is the absence of a clear demarcation line between “sacred” and “secular” objects and the multi-layered character of the different household media. The media discussed form an interesting selection, so that the articles grouped under this heading serve as stimulating examples, albeit not as an exhaustive overview of the different media used to express Roman religion.

The distinction between the second part and the third part (“Symbols and Practices”) appears somehow arbitrary: the cult sites, which are discussed in the first article of part III, could also be viewed as a focal point of media, just like the household space. In the same manner, the different rituals described — games, processions, prayers, hymns, music and dance, and last but not least sacrifice — can be seen both as media and practices. Apart from these considerations, the articles give a good overview of different Roman cult sites and of various aspects of Roman religious action. While the historical developments are highlighted in the discussion of cult sites, games and processions, the articles on prayers and sacrifice combine material from different periods into one synthetic view. The coexistence of both perspectives can be useful, rendering the reader sensitive to both continuity and change; it can also be misleading, leading to overlook developments and to see sacrifice and prayer as unchanging constants of Roman religion. The inclusion of a chapter on prayer and hymns is particularly important in view of a better understanding of ritual as consisting not only of bodily non-verbal actions, but also of verbal performance. Only the chapter on representations of dance and music would have better fitted thematically into the second part; it does not offer much insight and relies on an outdated phenomenological view of ritual

(cf. 259), not taking into account the recent expanding research on ritual or on the aesthetics of religion. In spite of its title, the whole third part is focused almost entirely on practices. A chapter on Roman gods as central symbols of Roman religion would have redressed the balance and provided the necessary background for a better understanding of religious practice.

The fourth part, “Actors and Action,” treats one of the most important themes of the book, especially given the shift of focus from cults to actors and their religious actions, which is announced in the introduction. It is opened by a general article on religious actors in daily life, which presents the established view that Roman religion was ritualistic in nature, based on practice, not on contemplation, concerned with establishing and maintaining the proper relationships with the gods and thus coping with “terrestrial and pragmatic” needs (289). It rightly stresses that the “Oriental” cults do not serve new needs of spirituality, but function in the same way as older Roman religious practices. Nevertheless, the overly sharp distinction between religion and philosophy (291), which alone enables the author to view Roman religion at all times as mainly ritualistic, is problematic and impedes a deeper understanding of the various facets of religiosity that can be seen in Roman society from the late republic onwards. The second contribution announces the analysis of the role played by the *nobiles* in republican religion, but focuses only on divination, which is however treated in great detail. The religious role of emperors is outlined in the third article, which in a very generalizing vein discusses the development of the emperor cult and of different attitudes towards the emperor and his family. The fourth chapter, devoted to Eastern provincial elites would have been very important for the book, had it considered religion; unfortunately, the article treating this group concentrates on regional politics and social positions, mentioning religious aspects only marginally. The section is concluded by an article on religious professionals and personnel, offering a counterpart to the other religious actors discussed in this part, for whom religion is not a means of subsistence. Different types of professionals are described, without further systematic reflection. On the whole, this part appears fragmentary, and does not sufficiently mirror the social stratification and differentiation of religion in the republic and the empire.

Some other religious actors are discussed in part V, “Different Religious Identities,” which focuses no longer on Roman religion as a whole, but only on the late republican and imperial times. An article about Diaspora Judaism presents a careful analysis of Jewish Diaspora communities and their strategies of adjustment, social continuity and identity formation, accompanied by a thorough reflection on methodological issues. It is followed by a chapter on the religion of intellectuals, which shows how philosophy in its varied forms

offered intellectuals different forms of religiosity, in addition to those of public cult. The author points to the conflation of rational theology and revelation and highlights the production of pagan revelatory texts, which he sees as a mainly literary response to Jewish-Christian prophecy. The “mystery cults” or “Oriental cults” that had since Cumont come to be seen as a hallmark of imperial and late antique Roman religion, are represented as a distinct type of religious identity by an article on Mithraism, which refreshingly departs from the astrological discussions which had come to dominate research and concentrates on sociological issues. The last article in this section explores the identity quest of Roman Christianity, concentrating mainly on the veneration of martyrs and its Romanisation, catalysed and enhanced by Constantine through public building programmes and the establishment of celebration paralleling Roman games.

The last part concentrates on the ‘export’ of Roman religion to the East and on outside perspectives. The first article cautions the readers against the common expectation that Roman civic cults move and spread, discussing the religious status of colonies and municipalities and stressing the fact that Roman religion was designed for Rome with its sacred geography and could only partially be exported elsewhere. The religious panorama of the Eastern provinces is the focus of another article, which outlines the interplay between Hellenistic culture, local traditions and Roman elements of religion, and emphasises tolerance as a fundamental feature. Finally, a chapter on Roman religion in Tertullian closes the section and the book, paradigmatically presenting a Christian provincial view that was later to become the foundation of Western Christian constructions of Roman religion.

The book presents a great amount of important material and offers some new and remarkable perspectives. Especially the emphasis on the dynamics of religion, on religious actors rather than statically conceived ‘cults’, is extremely fruitful. As a collection of specialised articles on various facets of the history of Roman religion, it is therefore highly valuable. As an overview of Roman religion, it has some shortcomings, arising mainly from the complexity of the subject and the vastness of the material. Some aspects of Roman religion, most notably philosophy, are poorly discussed, represented mainly by Greek-speaking Neoplatonists. The structure of the book is at times not perfectly stringent; a final systematic chapter would have perhaps helped to tie the various single threads together. For the historian of religion, the material presented offers many points of departure for comparative study and theory building: the differentiation of religion in Rome and the Roman empire due to various social and cultural criteria, the multi-layered meaning structure of media used to express religious contents, the indissoluble link between verbal and non-verbal

ritual performance and between ritual performance and a specific worldview. Last, but not least, it draws attention to the complex interplay of the local and the global dimension of religion. All these aspects help to develop the awareness that ancient Roman religion is not as far away from modern and even post-modern cultures as it may appear at first glance.

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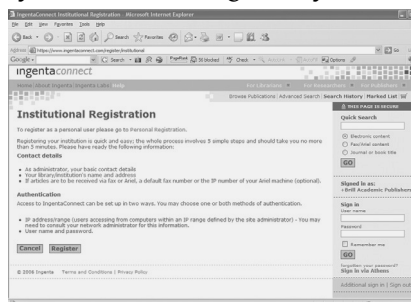
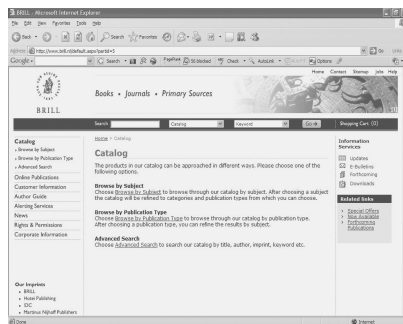
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Editorial

The Uses of Hell

Whereas the afterlife has always been a favourite topic for historians of religion, the idea of hell has often attracted less attention as a subject matter of comparative study than the place of eternal bliss. What religions have to say about salvation has generally been considered more interesting than their elaborations on perdition. Telling in this regard is, perhaps, G. van der Leeuw's statement in his *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* that, "the most vivid descriptions of infernal torments are only the foil against which human longing for deliverance and trust in salvation arise" (ch. 47.4). Such an approach hardly does justice to the richness and the pervasiveness of the descriptions of the infernal in many religious traditions. In this thematic issue an attempt has been made to look at the ideas about hell in various religions without seeing it primarily as the negative counterpart to the abode of salvation. In addition to some fresh approaches to problems regarding the historical origins and development of these ideas, questions are also asked about the cultural "work" that these ideas do — hence the title "The Uses of Hell." Thus, for instance, descriptions of infernal punishments may serve to make explicit a canon of undesirable types of behaviour in a culture or within a religious ethos; they may serve to define one's own religious group as distinct from others, by consigning the latter to eternal punishment as idolaters or heretics; they may serve as a rhetorical device to bring about conversion; or they may serve the socio-economic interests of the religious specialists or elite — monks, priests, evangelists — through claims that these agents possess the means whereby lay people may avoid or be relieved from the sufferings of hell. Finally, descriptions of hell may also serve as an exercise of the imagination, and in this respect function simply to entertain. It is hoped that the articles published here may inspire further investigations along these lines.

The articles published here were originally delivered as papers at a conference held in Bergen, 4–5 August, 2007. I wish to thank all the participants for their co-operation, the Bergen students who assisted in the organization, and the University of Bergen, which supported the conference financially through the “Bergen Universitetsfond.”

This is the last issue of *Numen* that I will edit. No deeper meaning should be inferred from the subject matter of this issue as to my feelings about my work as an editor during the last nine years. It has in fact been a most instructive and rewarding experience, and I wish to thank my co-editor Gustavo Benavides for his excellent collaboration, the President, General Secretary and the Executive Committee of the IAHR for their determined support of the journal, and the highly qualified staff at Brill for their invaluable assistance in getting *Numen* published.

Einar Thomassen

Pleading for Hell: Postulates, Fantasies, and the Senselessness of Punishment

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Abstract

If the ideal of justice includes effective punishment of offenders, an extension into afterlife must be postulated. This still involves all the questionable aspects and paradoxes of punishment that make rational and enlightened argumentation difficult.

A historical survey of ancient tentatives at hell lore shows diverse starting points and interests. There is just a germ of such speculations in Sumerian. When hell fire first appears in Egypt, it goes together with the fear of magic from the dead; in Zoroastrianism and Judaism it is partisan interest which makes the adherents of the wrong religion destined for hell. In Greece we find various ethical and poetical motifs interfering, from the powerful yet enigmatic images in the *Odyssey* to a general proclamation of punishments in the Hymn to Demeter. The most graphic and horrible descriptions of something like hell are finally found in Plato, whose sources — besides Homer — can be postulated but not identified.

Keywords

problem of punishment, Sumerian hell, Plato's myths, Nekyia, Sisyphos

Injustice hurts; to punish makes happy. This is a result of modern brain research (de Quervain and Fehr 2004). It is no surprise: most individuals will know the revolting experience of crime performed and the deep emotional satisfaction at the execution of justice, even if modern sensitivity will warn against unlimited enjoyment in such a case. In ancient Rome, executions were transferred to the arena to become public festivals.¹ A

¹) Seneca protested against the pleasure of viewing punishment in the arena (*Epist.* 7.5):

well-known German saying is, or was, *Strafe muß sein*, punishment must be. Punishment seems to be the very embodiment of justice. Greek *diken didonai*, “to give justice,” just means “to be punished.” And since there are spectacular crimes which do not meet with punishment in our world, the quest for satisfaction results in postulating *post-mortem* punishment. Punishment must be, that is, hell must be, hell as a place of punishment: *kolasterion* is the Greek term;² in modern Greek, hell is just *kolasis*. This comes right from the Gospel: Jesus, in Matthew 25:46 proclaims that sinners “will go away into eternal punishment.”³

Still, whatever brain research may suggest, rational reflection brings out the problems, the senselessness, even the “crime” of punishment (Menninger 1968).⁴ The idea and practice of punishment seems to be neither “natural” nor ubiquitous in human societies. Europeans stated with surprise how certain “primitive” societies seemed not to know about personal responsibility and punishment. Eskimo children are never punished, not even scolded by their parents. Apes do practice certain forms of casual revenge, but they do not react to crimes such as cannibalism within the own group (see Burkert 1994:10–12). The current situation in our Western world is somewhat schizophrenic: in contrast to the Middle Ages, punishment has nearly become a taboo word, and the acts are hidden from the public. The death penalty is absent from Europe, as are corporal punishments. Corporal punishment of children, an unquestioned reality of earlier centuries with Biblical reinforcement (Prov 23:13–14), has practically been abolished. But on the other side, there is general consent that crimes against humanity, Nazi crimes, cases of genocide cannot be forgiven nor forgotten. There are new international courts for prosecution and condemnation of those

even if the culprit “deserved to suffer this: what did you deserve that you view it?” Virgil (*Aen.* 6.608–14) does not admit curiosity about Tartarus: “Don’t ask!”

² E.g. Lucian, *Ver. hist.* 2.30, etc.

³ This is the main Christian text about hell (25:31–46): “the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (25:41); “weeping and gnashing of teeth” 25:30, etc.; cf. Matt 13:42; Mark 9:43.48.; Rev 19:20: “a sea of fire, burning with sulphur.” A different concept appears in the parable of poor Lazarus and the rich man, who after death finds himself “in Hades, amidst the tortures” (Luke 16:23–24); it has a parallel in a demotic text (Lichtheim 1980:139–41).

⁴ A first discussion of the problems of punishment is attributed to Protagoras by Plato, *Prot.* 324a–c.

guilty of such crimes. There still is general consent, respected by politicians: punishment must be.

But how does punishment make sense? If we follow the indications of the ancient Greek vocabulary,⁵ we encounter two contrasting aspects in two Greek word families commonly used in this context, *poine* and *timoria*. *Poine* is basically recompensation, “paying back,” making amends for damage incurred.⁶ This is absolutely reasonable, but quite questionable under the rigorous idea of justice: the procedure turns into some form of bargaining. *Timoria*, on the other side, means to “guard the honour” of some authority which is violated by misconduct.⁷ This seems closer to an ideal of justice — it is the favourite word used by Plato (Saunders 1991). Yet even if such authority were undisputed, how does punishment, which normally means to inflict discomfort, pain, and death, which is ugly and repulsive, turn into honour, honour of a monarch, a state, or even a god? It is a common postulate that punishment should “fit the crime”; how can it do that? There are few who defend a simple *lex talionis*, which means to double the damage. But as one begins to invent more and more severe measures to correspond to rising stages of misconduct, the result is frightening: the worst atrocities have been perpetrated not by criminals, but through acts of justice. The *non plus ultra* in ancient times was crucifixion, which kept a person dying for several days (Ducrey 1971; Hengel 1977; see Foucault 1975). Of course it has been proclaimed all the time that punishments are to deter possible culprits, and this has been widely

⁵ The general term *kolazein* is basically, notwithstanding its relations to hell, an optimistic metaphor: It means something like “to trim,” “to prune,” “to cut away” excessive growth, putting the image of the gardener before the executioner. See also Plato, *Prot.* 325d. For the word *zemia*, which I take to be a dialect form of *demia* used at Olympia, see Burkert 1994:16–17.

⁶ *Poine* clearly comes from Indo-European stock and goes together with the verb *tinein*, *teisasthai*; this means something like “to pay” and “to make pay,” in a pre-monetary system. You may compensate even for killing by *poine* (*Iliad* 9.632–34; 18.497; this is forbidden in the Hebrew Bible: Num 35:31–34). *Apoina* linguistically is an intensification of *poine* (*Iliad* 1.13 ff.; 24.137). Latin *poena*, *punire* — hence French *la peine*, English *to punish* — are loanwords which have changed their meanings to downright “punishment.”

⁷ *Tima-woros*, the one who “guards honour.” This need not be “just” in a moral sense. It can be done by a demonstration of violence.

accepted.⁸ It still means that justice, stripped to its essentials, is terror. It might seem rational to make culprits disappear by imprisonment or capital punishment lest they could harm society — had such methods not been used too often by downright terrorist regimes.

An optimistic view holds that appropriate punishment serves to “make better” the culprit. In semi-modern times *kolasteria* were turned into institutions of “correction.” Even corporal punishment has been defended under such a heading.⁹ More modern terms are re-education and re-socialization. This idea is pursued to absolute absurdity already in Plato’s *Gorgias* (476a ff.): If, Socrates argues, punishment means “healing of malice” (478d), every evil-doer ought to hasten to the judge to find such remedies for his moral illness (480ab).

If defence of punishment is threatened by absurdity, none of the common justifications holds for that virtual theatre of punishment which constitutes hell, the *kolasterion* in the Beyond. If this is a place of “eternal” suffering, there is no possible recompensation to be made, nor any “making better” by education. Great sinners are “incurable” (*aniatoi*), in the terms of Plato; punishment is “eternal” in the resounding menace of the Gospel. One might introduce temporarily limited forms of punishment even in hell, as Plutarch is prone to do;¹⁰ Christians, in the wake of Virgil, invented Purgatory, which has been given up again by Protestants.¹¹ If there is any “guarding of honour” through hell, it is not edifying; one hesitates to imagine gods or god present at the infernal scenes dominated by devils. Punishment in hell is as absolute as it is senseless. There remains terror and some uncanny pleasure.

Even if the intention of hell is to deter possible culprits, this is impeded by lack of publicity. Writers supply rare witnesses, from Er the Pamphylian to Virgil’s Aeneas. Both Plato and Virgil are anxious to introduce some public declaration: Plato (*Resp.* 616a) has fiery demons seizing the worst criminals, and “to whomever was there they indicated

⁸) Already in Plato, *Prot.* 324b.

⁹) Proverb in Herondas 2.101: “flogged he will be better”; on “purification” (*kathairein*) in this sense, see Burkert 1996:127 n.99; the saying “to beat the hell out of him” recalls Christian exorcism.

¹⁰) Plut. *De Sera* 567F: Nero, in hell, is relieved from his well-deserved sufferings because of the good he has done for Greece.

¹¹) See Le Goff 1981; Merkt 2005; Verg. *Aen.* 6.736–47.

for what cause they were dragged along, to be thrown into the Tartaros.” Virgil makes the criminals in Tartarus cry out: “Learn justice, by this warning, and not to despise the gods” (*Aen.* 6.629). But who will hear this? To notice such proclamations, we have to trust poetry, or sacred scripture.

Ideas about the afterlife are anything but uniform, and they are subject to ongoing modifications. One of the oldest documents about afterlife is the Sumerian text *Bilgames and the Netherworld*, which was later, in Akkadian translation, added to the *Gilgamesh* epic as tablet XII. The Sumerian original is now available in the edition of A. R. George,¹² who mentions some 62 manuscripts. The text was perpetuated in Mesopotamian school tradition. Enkidu, coming up from the Netherworld, is questioned by his friend about the conditions in the other place. The message is desperate: “you will sit down and weep.” The dominant mood is sheer realism: the dead are “lying in the mud,” as the corpse is “turning into clay.” Still, according to Enkidu, the situation becomes more and more comfortable with the number of children left behind by a dead person. But what is especially interesting is that in the further enumeration of special cases within the Netherworld the various manuscripts have different additions.¹³ Writers have been elaborating on these themes. The standard *Gilgamesh* epic has discarded these additions. There is speculative curiosity: “Did you see the man who was burnt to death? — His ghost is not there, his smoke went up to the heavens.”¹⁴ One small group of manuscripts mentions faults committed by the living which have their consequences in the Beyond.¹⁵ “Did you see the man who did not respect the word of his mother and father?” He “drinks water measured in a scale, and he never gets enough.” This in a way seems to foreshadow Tantalus. Second, “the man afflicted by the curse of his mother and father”: he “is deprived of an heir, his ghost still roams” — evidently because he lacks a funeral cult. Third, “the man who made light of the name of his god,” or, “the one who cheated

¹² *Gilgamesh* II 743–777, in George 2003. See Katz 2003.

¹³ *Gilgamesh* II 763–71 and 774–77, in George 2003; manuscripts a to qq.

¹⁴ Manuscript t 2, George 2003, 2:776. This speculation may underlie the strange verses about Heracles in the *Odyssey* (11.602–3), which were controversial already in antiquity (see Heubeck and Hoekstra 1989:114).

¹⁵ Manuscripts l.m.n, George 2003, 2:776.

a god and swore an oath”:¹⁶ he “eats bitter bread, drinks bitter water.” These seem to be comparatively mild consequences; one might still speak of incipient hell. Breaking oaths and doing violence to parents — in Greek *epiorkoi* and *patraloiai* — are still the standard sins of those lying in the mire in Aristophanes’ *Frogs*.¹⁷

For the Egyptians the concern about afterlife and the care of the dead are central. Characteristic is the idea of a judgment of the dead, Anubis weighing the heart of the deceased against the feather of truth on a big scale.¹⁸ The formulas in these texts do their best to guarantee a prosperous outcome, a successful journey through the Beyond in the wake of the sun god. But Egyptian texts and pictures also present various tortures of the dead, *Höllenvorstellungen*, as Erich Hornung (1968) has called them. What is especially impressive: sinners are being cooked in huge pots on a fire — this use of hell-fire has somehow entered European folklore, down to Grimms’ *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*.¹⁹ Still Egyptians seem to be motivated less from that pleasure of witnessing punishment than from the fear of magic that could be wrought by the mischievous dead: these should be invalidated, nay utterly destroyed in the Beyond — which is the very opposite of “eternal punishment.”

A third voice in the dialogue of ancient civilizations is Zoroastrianism. We cannot give certain dates to the Avestan texts, but it is usually assumed that they mainly go back to Achaemenid times (see, in general, Stausberg 2002). For this religion the distinction between correct and wrong worship is all-important: it is the one great decision between *asha* and *drug* that matters. A prominent Avestan text is the so-called *Hadoxt Nask*, which describes the destiny of the soul after death (Piras 2000). Strict dualism prevails: the faithful soul will be escorted to heaven, but the evil one, in the third night after death, is met with a stinking wind from north, more stinking than anything in our world; and as he or she starts to move, she plunges down into “infinite darkness.” The late Pahlavi texts, of the 9th century AD, have more graphic

¹⁶ Manuscript l line 1, George 2003, 2:776, plus manuscript v line 1, ib. 777; there the line that contains the answer is destroyed.

¹⁷ See at n. 27.

¹⁸ Suffice it to refer to Hornung 1972, 1979.

¹⁹ No. 100, “Des Teufels rußiger Bruder”; see H.-J. Uther in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* VI [Berlin 1990], 1191–96 s.v. “Höllenzeiger.”

details. The *Bundahisn* describes the narrow bridge which the soul has to pass, and behold, the evil one falls down to hell, where she or he will experience all kinds of evil. In the Pahlavi book of *Ardai Viraz*, the hero is led both through heaven and through hell, to witness fantastic punishments for special crimes (Widengren 1961:179, 231–42). This hell is quite similar to that of Christians or Muslims.

Some hints at the Jewish contribution: a hell of fire makes its appearance not in the canonical Bible, but in Hellenistic Judaism, especially in the Ethiopic *Enoch*.²⁰ Also in the Qumran texts, the *Rule of the Community* consigns the evil ones to “the darkness of eternal fire” (1 QS 2.8).²¹ This also means “everlasting destruction” (1 QS 2.15). From the name of gê-Hinnom, a valley close to Jerusalem, *geenna* has been derived as a name for hell; it occurs in the New Testament and has later passed into Islam.²²

In Greek literature, the Beyond as a place of punishment is fully elaborated in the myths of Plato. It was the Platonic texts that were read again and again in the centuries to come. Probably Christian hell would be there without Plato, but Christian Platonism did its best to reinforce such beliefs. Three of his texts have become classics, three variations, in *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, and the *Republic*. *Gorgias* puts in focus the judgment of the dead, naming Minos, Aiakos and Rhadamanthys (523e) — they appear in iconography too.²³ It is Rhadamanthys (526b) who destines the souls either for the Isles of the Blest or for Tartaros, that “jail of punishment and justice” (523b), a “fortress” (*phroura* 525a), where the soul will arrive to “to suffer the fitting sufferings” — the uncanny, immeasurable chasm called Tartaros in Hesiod (*Theog.* 720–25) has acquired a more concrete function. Punishment means either to “become better”

²⁰ 90.26–27: “I saw... an opening in the midst of the earth, full of fire... Those sheep, blinded by sin, were brought to court, and were found guilty, and thrown into the abyss of fire, and they were burning.” Cf. 10.6, 10.13, 18.11–16, 21, 22, 54; similar is “the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” Matt 25:41, see n.3.

²¹ *esh olamim*; “dark fire” is an invention to combine two terrifying ideas; cf. 4.13, 5.134.

²² Jeremias 1933. The word is avoided by Hellenists such as Philo und Josephus, although Josephus mentions “eternal punishment” *Ant.* 18.14; *Bell.* 2.163, 3.375; cf. “the judgment of geenna” Matt 23:33; Qur’an S. 38:55–58.

²³ See *LIMC* s.v. Aiakos 1–3, Minos, Rhadamanthys; in addition, Triptolemos comes in, possibly from Eleusinian influence: Schwarz 1987:160–63; Plat. *Apol.* 41a.

or to become a warning example, according to the distinction between “curable” and “incurable” defects; the criminals “are suffering the greatest, the most painful, the most terrible sufferings for all the time, in fact hung up as examples in the jail of Hades, a show and a warning for the unjust who will come there” (525c). This makes the first full and complete Greek description of hell. Dante could give more detail, but hardly aggravate the concept.²⁴

The *Phaedo* (110b–114c) has more to say on cosmology than on hell, with a strange system of subterranean tunnels and rivers, four of which form a system, Okeanos, Acheron, Pyriphlegethon and Styx, which is also called Kokytos (112e–113c). This is elaborating on the *Odyssey*. Among the dead arriving there, the middle class, so to say, get to the Acherousian Sea, whereas the “incurable” ones are thrown right down into Tartaros; sinners who have committed grievous yet curable faults, including murderers and *patraloiai*, are swept out of Tartaros again by the two rivers — *patraloiai* by Pyriphlegethon, murderers by Kokytos; arriving again at the central island, they cry for forgiveness; if those whom they have wronged agree, they will get out of the whirlpool. This requirement of “forgiveness” corresponds to real if old-fashioned law.²⁵ Pure souls, by contrast, and philosophical souls in particular have nothing to fear; there remains “good hope” for them.

Most elaborate is the myth at the end of the *Republic* (614b–615d), presenting the message of Er the Pamphylian who had been killed but came back to life. This Er tells of a “demoniac” place of judgment, with two openings (*chasmata*) both in heaven and in earth, through which the souls, after judgment, disappear and come back; they pass to the “meadow,” where they narrate to each other the wonders of heaven and the infernal sufferings. “Whatever acts of injustice they have committed, for all of these they give tenfold retribution... they get tenfold pains for every single instance” (615b); notable among the special crimes listed here are civic offences such as treason against a city or an army — Plato is writing a work on the “State” — but also the enslavement of free persons; *patraloiai* (cf. Plat. *Leg.* 881a), suicide, impiety are mentioned

²⁴ See also [Plato] *Axiochus* 371e–f: the guilty dead are licked by wild beasts, burnt permanently with torches by avenging demons, “tortured by every kind of torment and worn out by eternal punishments.”

²⁵ *aidesasthai* of all relatives in the Laws of Drakon, see Stroud 1968.

in passing (615c), and there is an allusion to some special fate of those who died as little children (*ahoroi*, 615c). If any of the very bad criminals try to escape by the rivers — the paradigm is Ardiaios the tyrant — the *chasma* will suddenly yell with alarm, “and wild men, burning with fire through and through, as was to be seen, took position, as they noticed the cry, and they grasped those and led them away; as to Ardiaios and others, they bound them hands and feet, and even their head, they threw them down and stripped off their skin, they dragged them on, mangling them on the shrubs by the road; and they indicated to those passing by what this was for, and that they were being led to be thrown down into Tartarus.” It is in this passage that an especially impressive phantasm of hell appears: those demoniac “men burning with fire through and through,” whom we would not hesitate to call devils, while further details are evidently taken from real executions, such as the painful “dragging along” which still preceded execution in early modern times.

Plato refers to current *mythoi* about Hades, which indicate “that whoever does wrong here must be punished there” (*Resp.* 330d). For some time it was taken for granted that Plato was following “Orphic” sources; this would mean the postulation of at least one poem ascribed to Orpheus in which the putative author, on account of his own *kathodos* experience while searching for Eurydice, described the Netherworld in more detail, with more system, if with less poetry than the Homeric *Odyssey*; the putative author would especially have distinguished several classes among the dead, including the *ahoroi*, and special punishments for special offences. We must admit that we know next to nothing about such a poem;²⁶ we must reckon with the creative originality of Plato the writer, who was great in developing his own inventions. Still, the way he skips the themes of *patraloiai* and of *ahoroi* in the *Republic* indicates that there were other, earlier elaborations known to him and probably to his readers; these might be not just poetry but texts underlying the *teletai*, initiations, containing curses and blessings.

A strange guide to the beyond is Aristophanes in his *Frogs*, 405 BC. Aristophanes introduces a chorus of *mystai*, evidently Eleusinian *mystai*,

²⁶ See Graf 1974. For the critical position against “Orphism” see Wilamowitz 1931–32, 2:182–204; Thomas 1938; Linforth 1941; Dodds 1951:147–49. The Orphic theogony quoted in the Derveni papyrus has no indication of underworld punishments, nor do the gold plates.

praising Iakchos; this does not mean that all the details which Aristophanes mentions must be “Eleusinian”; there may rather be some kind of popular background. Heracles, who should know, describes the lake to be crossed by Charon’s boat (138–44), and then a great mass of mud (*borboros*) and “ever-flowing excrement”; it is there that the evildoers are lying, those who did wrong to a guest, who misused and cheated a boy, who beat their own mother or father, or who committed perjury (145–50; cf. 274–75). This is slightly more than what Enkidu, in those additions to the Sumerian poem, had to report; hospitality is a basic item of morality guarded by Zeus.²⁷ The “mud” in which one lies has its precedent in the Mesopotamian “clay,” but becomes more repulsive than in Enkidu’s report, having changed from a physical reality to an instrument of punishment. *Borboros* is mentioned as a threat to *amyttoi* also in Plato (*Phaed.* 69c).

Pindar elaborates the theme of transmigration, with a short allusion to the sufferings of evildoers in the Netherworld (*Ol.* 2.67). Plato too includes transmigration in the great canvas of his *Republic*. Transmigration could implement punishment without a *kolasterion*, without hell: Plato, in his *Laws* (870d), describes as the teaching of specialists of *teletai* that people, when they return to this life, necessarily have to pay the “natural” retribution, which means “to suffer what one has done himself, to end his life with such a fate,” wrought by some other person. Aristotle quotes “to suffer what one has done” as the justice (*dikaion*) of Rhadamanthys (*EN* 1132b25), no doubt in his function as judge of the dead. The gold plates have allusions to metempsychosis, and to “having paid penalty (*poine*) for unrighteous deeds” (6 Graf-Johnston); “the initiate is free from *poine*,” another tablet claims (27 Graf-Johnston); this could be understood along the lines of Rhadamanthys’ principle. If Pindar, Plato and others still have additional punishments in Hades besides metempsychosis, this comes from a different strain of tradition and imagination.

Some Pythagorean elements can be traced. According to the old collection of *akousmata*, thunder exists to threaten “those in Tartaros, to make them afraid” (Arist. *An. post.* 94b33; see Burkert 1972:166–92).

²⁷ Cf. the “Buzygian curses” Luc. *Dea Syria* 12–13. “Cheating boys” may well be an Aristophanean pun — it is not sex that is punished. The Netherworld itself has various terrible monsters that may torture a body, *Ran.* 472–77.

This does not tell who exactly are those down in Tartaros, but it makes a common and frequent event an ubiquitous admonition of what is going on there. According to Hieronymus, Pythagoras reported, from his own *katabasis*, about various punishments in the Netherworld (Hieronymus fr. 42 Wehrli = Diog. Laert. 8.21); on the other hand the gloomy *gnome* that men have come into life for the sake of punishment, and hence they should be punished (Iambl. *Vit. Pyth.* 85), would fit a metempsychosis system even without an otherworld *kolasterion*.

The earliest general statement of infernal punishments in Greek literature occurs, surprisingly enough, in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* (about 600?); this passage has often been overlooked.²⁸ Hades is speaking to Persephone, queen of the Netherworld, about the honours that will be her due (367–69): “for evildoers there will be punishment all day long, those who do not appease your heart with sacrifices, performing pure rituals, paying appropriate gifts.” We are not informed by other testimonies about “appropriate gifts” for Persephone, nor did she have special sanctuaries.²⁹ One might think of a reference to the Eleusinian mysteries; the role of Triptolemos as one of the judges of the dead (note 23) might go with this. Yet in the hymn the mysteries are introduced only in a later passage (473–82); there the threat to non-initiates is expressed with utmost restraint: they have “not a similar fate” as compared to the blessed initiates. Plato (*Resp.* 378a) criticizes the Eleusinian initiation for being too cheap: just one pig. He would have had reason to criticize more severely that bargaining of *tisis* which is suggested in the hymn: Hades is giving advice how to evade justice by paying “appropriate gifts” — which calls to mind those “beggars and soothsayers” whom Plato treats with scorn (*Resp.* 364b).

We finally arrive at “Homer,” where we meet with two kinds of evidence: casual mentions of the *Erinyes* in the *Iliad*, and the great description of the Netherworld, the *Nekyia* in the *Odyssey*. *Erinyes* has a long and dark prehistory.³⁰ Since Homer, *Erinyes* are the embodiment of curses; “we are called *Arai*,” they bluntly state in Aeschylus (*Eum.* 417)

²⁸) It is not mentioned in Rohde’s *Psyche*; see the long and inconclusive discussion in Richardson 1974:270–75.

²⁹) There are no less enigmatic verses in Pindar (fr. 133) about Persephone “accepting the *poine* for ancient grief”

³⁰) It occurs, in the singular, in Linear B.

with the solemn declaration that their pursuit will not stop even in Hades (*Eum.* 339–40). The *Erinyes* react to curses especially of father and mother; this concerns Oedipus, Phoinix, Meleagros.³¹ The oath-ceremony of the third book of the *Iliad* includes an invocation to “you who, beneath the earth, take revenge on men (*tinyntai*) who commit perjury” (3.278–79); in a similar way Agamemnon, swearing his oath, invokes Zeus, Earth, Helios “and Erinyes, [and] who beneath the earth take revenge on men, whoever commits perjury” (19.259–60).³² In other words, *patraloiai* and *epiorkoi* are the principal victims of *Erinyes*, which connects with Enkidu as well as with Aristophanes’ parody.

The *Nekyia* of the *Odyssey* has no *Erinyes*, but some famous “sinners” who are suffering “grievous pain.” Poetry though has created a problem of its own: the dead are deprived of power and even of consciousness (*aménena*), they cannot even make conversation unless they have drunk fresh blood from Odysseus’ sacrifice. In consequence, any punishment of the dead should be excluded, just as interventions of the dead in the life of the living. Yet in the second part of the *Nekyia*, after the so-called intermezzo, this principle appears to be given up: Odysseus speaks to Agamemnon, Achilles, and Aias, and he sees other notable dwellers of the Beyond.³³ Wilamowitz proposed to delete the whole passage from 565 to 631 as an “Orphic interpolation,” which he would assign to the 6th century.³⁴ Others would defend the integrity of the book. The evidence for an Orphic underworld is meagre. And the relevant passage may be more “Homeric” than normally perceived.

It belongs to the most famous pieces of Homer. Three are seen by Odysseus who “have strong pains”: Tityus, Tantalus, and Sisyphus. Tityus, a giant, is lying on the earth while two vultures are devouring his liver, “for he injured Leto, the glorious spouse of Zeus, when she

³¹) *Il.* 9.454, 9.571; *Od.* 2.135, 11.280. Individual names for the *Erinyes* are not yet given in Hesiod, but current since Virgil (Allekto Megaira Teisiphone).

³²) Some interpreters hold that “beneath the earth” in this verse is just referring to the home of the Erinyes, while punishment will strike living men; see the discussion in Edwards 1991:265–66.

³³) Porphyry, in his book *Peri Stygos* (ed. Castelletti), proposes a geographical solution: Acheron, he claims, separates two provinces, the realm of consciousness, where Tantalos, Sisyphos, Minos and Herakles dwell, and the realm of unconsciousness.

³⁴) Wilamowitz 1884:199–226 (verses 565–631), following Kirchhoff 1879:231–33 (verses 565–627); not athetized in Rohde 1898, 1:61–64; cf. Heubeck 1989:111.

was going to Pytho through Panopeus, place of beautiful dances” (11.580–81) This refers to some tale about Leto and Delphi, probably involving baby Apollo. So much is clear: there was sexual offence, and punishment is made to fit the crime.³⁵ Few will anyhow have a chance to repeat the sin of Tityus.

It is different with the other two, and only they have risen to proverbial status: Tantalus and Sisyphus. We all can visualize Tantalus, standing in the water which reaches to the chin of the thirsty man, but disappears as he moves; and there are the branches with luxurious fruit above his head that jerk out of reach whenever he tries to grasp them. And we see Sisyphos incessantly pushing up the stone which predictably will come down again. These are pictures impressed on our mind. In the “reception” of the *Odyssey*, Tityus has practically disappeared, but Tantalus and Sisyphus have remained prominent. To Sisyphus has been dedicated a famous essay by Albert Camus.

These men are normally called “sinners” in English, even if this sounds like a Christian intrusion (Heubeck 1989:112); the German term is *Büßer*, repentants, recalling even more drastically a Christian institution, penitence, *Buße*. But what is strange in the text of the *Odyssey* is that there is no mention of any “sin”; no further explanation or comment is given about what these two men have committed. Some *daimon* makes the water dry up in front of Tantalus (587), and a certain *Krataiis* — another obscure demon, mother of Skylla (12.124) — gives the push to the stone of Sisyphus. But the fault of either Tantalus or Sisyphus remains in the dark. There is no verdict, no sentence; Minos is not concerned with Sisyphus, Rhadamanthys is absent. If punishment means the duality of delinquency and consequence, with pertinent explanation and public proclamation, what happens to Tantalus and Sisyphus cannot be termed punishment. They are definitely not repentants; they will not “become better.” There is no comment on their actions: they are not introduced as “sinners.” They suffer, no doubt, but apparently without a cause. For contrast, see Plato as he picks out Archelaos or Ardiaios, with clear pronouncement of their crimes (*Gorg.* 525d; *Resp.* 615e).

Commentators are of course ready to provide the missing stories, and they tend to assert that these stories must have been “generally

³⁵⁾ The liver is commonly thought to be the organ of irrational desire and lust.

known” (Heubeck 1989:112–13). An essay by Christiane Sourvinou Inwood with the title “Crime and Punishment” (1986) tries to supply the proper context in detail. Of course there are such stories about both Tantalus and Sisyphus in later sources, written by authors who know the *Odyssey*, and for a public who knows the *Odyssey* too; they occur in variants, and it is unclear as to how far they contain anything pre-Homeric or are just made up to fit the famous text.

Sisyphus is mentioned in the *Iliad* as the cleverest (*kerdistos*) of men (*Iliad* 6.153); we may believe Alcaeus (fr. 38) that he tried to escape death. This however can hardly be called a crime, even if it would disturb the order of the world. It was an attempt at the impossible, matched by the impossibility to finish the “toil” allotted to him in Hades. It is interesting that the pictorial tradition finds it necessary to make additions to the Homeric text. A relief from Foce del Sele has a small figure, a demon sitting on the neck of Sisyphus; Apulian vase paintings, in a more explicit and more banal way, have an Erinyes hitting at Sisyphus with a powerful whip³⁶ — the forced labour of a slave; none of this is in Homer.

As to Tantalus, he is involved in various strands of Greek mythology, from Asia Minor to Olympia to Mycenae. One remarkable testimony is the fragment of an epic “Return of the Atreidai” (*Atreidon Kathodos*):³⁷ Tantalus, living in the company of the gods, is granted a wish from Zeus. He wishes to live like the gods. Thereupon Zeus provides an abundance of food but makes a stone hang over his head so that Tantalos, for fear of the stone, can never touch his food. Now some version of *Atreidon Kathodos* was clearly known to the poet of our *Odyssey*, who makes Orestes a model for Telemachus and contrasts the “graceful song of Penelope” with the “loathsome song of Klytaimnestra” (*Od.* 1.298–300, cf. 1.35–43; 24.196–202). Pindar, too, has the stone above Tantalus’ head, who is thus “astray of happiness” (*Ol.* 1.57). Thus there is a distinct possibility that the suffering of Tantalus comes from an epic poem that is older than our *Odyssey* and may still have been known to Pindar. Euripides has the stone too (*Or.* 4–10). He makes the fault of Tantalus

³⁶ Foce del Sele: LIMC Sisyphos no. 26; Apulian underworld vases: LIMC Poine nos. 1–3 = Sisyphos nos. 22–24.

³⁷ Usually identified with the *Nostoi*: Ath. 281b = *Nostoi* X Allen, 4 Bernabé; not mentioned in Heubeck 1989, but in Wilamowitz-Moellendorf 1884:156–57, 201.

“not controlling his tongue”; Pindar says it was stealing nectar and ambrosia from the gods’ table, which keeps to the theme of eating and drinking. The really terrible and grotesque crime of Tantalus which Pindar knows and discards (*Ol.* 1.26–53), the cannibalistic feast presented to the Olympian gods, seems not to be used to motivate the Odyssean “pain.” We may conclude that the poet of our *Odyssey* has left out the very instrument of punishment, the stone, and made the sheer impossibility of drinking and eating an ever-lasting process.

Neither Sisyphus nor Tantalus are paradigms of justice in the sense of crime and punishment, cause and consequence. It is the enchanting force of the Homeric text that it does not really need the complements adduced by sedulous interpreters. What catches the attention, what remains unforgettable, is just the process in itself, futility in endless repetition: the paradigm of senselessness. Note that Pyriphlegethon, the river that together with Kokytos flows into Acheron (*Od.* 10.513), has nothing to do with hellfire, even if later interpreters, and definitely the Christians, did understand it in this way.³⁸ No, Pyriphlegethon, Kokytos and Acheron, fire together with “wailing” and “grief,” characterize the funeral: the pyre burning, the laments, and the mourning. In Hades even the trees lose their fruit (*Od.* 12.410): no growing, no hope. Note also the abysmal resignation of Achilles (11.489–91) and the silence of Ajax (11.564): nothing is to be expected or to be regained in Hades. Seen in this way the verses about Tantalus and Sisyphus are not just incomplete accounts drawn from some other source, but an original characterization of the Beyond: not the automatism of crime and punishment, not the terror of justice, but senselessness. The Greek term is *mataioponia*.

Indeed we find such a picture elaborated in another set of images which seem to go back to the 6th century: carrying water in a leaky vessel, plaiting a rope which is eaten up by a donkey. This, side by side with Tantalus and Sisyphus, adds to the paradigm of *mataioponia*. The evidence is somewhat fragmentary: a lost painting, some vase pictures, and a complicated text of Plato’s. The earlier group of evidence is iconographic: Pausanias describes the underworld painting by Polygnotos

³⁸) Clem. *Str.* 5.91.2; see also Damascius, *In Phaed.* II § 145 Westerink. Contra Rohde 1898, 1:54, with reference to Apollodorus *FGrHist* 422 F 102 and *Schol. Od.* 12.514.

at Delphi (Paus. 10.28–31).³⁹ There are two females in the picture carrying water in broken sherds, and the inscription says they are “not initiated” (10.31.9) — probably it read AMYHTOI; elsewhere in the picture there is a big *pithos*, and various people, old and young, male and female, carrying water; an old woman pours her water from a broken *hydria* into the *pithos*. Sisyphus and Tantalus are on either side of the scene (10.31.11). This is multiplied *mataioponia* in the Netherworld, supplementing Sisyphus and Tantalus, with the catchword AMYHTOI. Pausanias says he thinks these water-carriers are people who disregard the Eleusinian mysteries. He further describes a man inscribed OKNOΣ, “Hesitation,” who is plaiting a rope of rush which is eaten away by his donkey (10.29.1); the “rope of Oknos,” Pausanias adds, is proverbial in Ionia.⁴⁰

In addition there are blackfigure vases, three so far, with corresponding pictures, one from Athens, one from Palermo, one in Munich, dated 530 to 500 BC; thus they are one or two generations earlier than any possible date for Polygnotus’ painting.⁴¹ They show a big *pithos* dominating the scene; the Munich vase has *eidola*, small persons with wings, climbing up the *pithos* to pour out their jugs; Sisyphus has his place, and his toil, besides. The Palermo vase has more personnel, males and females, occupied with their water jugs, while a big donkey is kneeling down besides the *pithos*. This should be Oknos’ donkey, but the action of the man in front of the donkey is not that clear; other variants of the motif have been tried by interpreters. Diodorus (1.97) asserts that there was a ritual at Akanthos near Memphis where both water-pouring and rope-plaiting were ritually enacted. Perhaps that is too nice to be true.⁴²

Anyhow this is a message, going beyond Homer’s *Nekyia*, about mysteries and their importance for afterlife, a warning to AMYHTOI. The main literary text referring to the same is Plato, *Gorgias* (493a–d).⁴³

³⁹) Dated 470/440, see *LIMC* Amyetoi.

⁴⁰) Cf. Kratinos fr. 367 Kassel-Austin; Wilamowitz 1884:202; Graf 1974:188–94; Keuls 1974:36–37.

⁴¹) *LIMC* Amyetoi 1/2/3; Cook 1914–40, 3:400.

⁴²) The donkey eating the rope appears even in a Demotic tale about the Netherworld, probably deriving from the Greek: Lichtheim 1980:141.

⁴³) Cf. Dodds 1951:225; Burkert 1972:248 n.48. See also Philetairos fr.17 Kassel-Austin.

Socrates is retelling, he says, the allegory of a myth somebody has taught him; the myth is due, he suggests, to some “gifted man,” possibly from Sicily or Italy (493a). The myth tells that in Hades AMYHTOI are carrying water with sieves into a leaky *pitthos* — a double futility. The teacher of Socrates has presented an allegorical interpretation: uncontrolled lust is misery, the endless toil of a leaky soul; Socrates uses this to refute the amoral desires of Kallikles. The original “myth,” stripped of this interpretation, evidently has the same message about the mysteries as those pictures: do not miss mystery initiation through “hesitation.” Mystery initiation is a *teleté*, a word associated with *télos* “end, fulfilment”;⁴⁴ if missed, this cannot be made good afterwards. Hades, where no fruits grow, means futility. The *mataiopia* of AMYHTOI is not punishment in the normal sense; no crime has been committed, there was just a fatal omission. Only *mystai* will pursue their glorious way in the beyond.⁴⁵

The basis for the *Gorgias* passage as well as for the pictures must have been a 6th century text advertising mysteries. Should we assign it to Orpheus telling his *katabasis*, as Wilamowitz thought, to a poem about the *katabasis* of Heracles, or just to Eleusinian priests? Heracles was declared a *mystes* of Eleusis, as attested already in a poem by Pindar (fr. 346b).⁴⁶ Pausanias associates the pictures of Polygnotus with Eleusis. The *Hymn to Demeter*, which concentrates on Eleusis, refers to punishments in the Beyond.⁴⁷ Eleusinian Triptolemos becomes one of the judges of the dead. Note that the first real *Telesterion* at Eleusis, the big closed hall to hold all the *mystai* during the secret ceremonies, was built at the end of the 6th century, by Peisistratids or by early democracy — this is controversial.⁴⁸ *Mataiopia* or else actual punishments seem to be two different concepts,⁴⁹ but consistency is not to be expected in this field. Even

⁴⁴ *Teleté* occurs in the gold plates and in Plato, *Resp.* 365a.

⁴⁵ Last verse of the Hipponion text, Graf-Johnston no. 1. Mystery priests used also the menace of “lying in the mud,” Plat. *Phaed.* 69c.

⁴⁶ Heracles in Euripides, *HF* 613: “I succeeded (in the exploits in the Netherworld) because I had seen the orgies of the *mystai*.” For pictures with the initiation of Heracles see *ThesCRA* II nos. 25, 29, 34/5, 37.

⁴⁷ See at n.28.

⁴⁸ Cf. *ThesCRA* II 94.

⁴⁹ Plato mentions “lying in the mud,” but also the vague threat that “for those who do not sacrifice terrible things are waiting,” *Resp.* 365a.

Eleusis was not a dogmatically organized church; Eumolpids could develop individual teachings. So we can hardly decide what should be called Pythagorean, or Orphic, or Eleusinian in this message. Let us be content to state that we meet with a cautionary myth used by certain mystery priests since the 6th century that states, instead of fantastic punishments, the endless futility in Hades, parallel to Tantalus and Sisyphus. Tityus, in Polygnotus' painting, is reduced to a shadow in the background: his punishment, Pausanias insists (10.29.3), has come to an end.

Hades of senselessness or Hades of punishment, *mataioponia* or else *kolasterion* — whatever our sympathies, punishments came back and finally prevailed. The water-carriers in Hades were identified with the Danaids, at least since the 3rd century.⁵⁰ The Danaids killed their bridegrooms in the bridal chamber. There is a cause, there is punishment, a warning against murderous females. The idea of crime and punishment has won out as against a "Homeric" tendency to sketch senselessness as endlessness.⁵¹ This may have been a special Homeric invention: to make death, with unabated seriousness, an infinite process without hope, still free from a torturer's fantasies.

⁵⁰ Keuls 1974; Rohde 1898, 1:326–29; oldest text: [Plat.] *Axiochus* 371e. Rohde claimed that the watercarrying motif originated with the Danaids: they are trying to arrange their own nuptial bath which they have missed in life. The evidence we have speaks against this sequence of the versions: In the standard myth the Danaids get married after all to Argive partners (Pind. *Py.* 9.112–16), whereas the early vases as well as Polygnotus have both males and females involved: AMYHTOI, not Danaids. Whether already the Danaid trilogy of Aeschylus had the punishment in Hades we do not know.

⁵¹ Another graphic addition to afterlife punishments is Ixion (Hixion in a 5th century painting, *LIMC* Ixion no. 2; earliest vase-painting about 500, *LIMC* no. 1); Aeschylus *Ixion* (fr. 89–93) and *Eumenides* 424–27; Pindar *Py.* 2.21–48 (475?). Ixion commits the murder of a kinsman, achieves purification by Zeus himself, but then tries to make love to Hera; he couples with a cloud which gives birth to Kentauros (a pun: *kentein auran* sting a cloud). For punishment Ixion is fettered to a big rotating wheel, flying "everywhere" through the air. This is crime and punishment, *amplakiai pherepoinoi* (Pind. *Py.* 2.30), even "eternal punishment" (Diod. 4.69.5), with Kratos and Bia doing their job, and with a message (Pind. *Py.* 2.21), possibly on the background of rituals with rolling wheels (Burkert, *Homo necans* 206 n.11) in combination with a realistic instrument of torture (Anakreon 388; Antiphon 1.20; Aristoph. *Pax* 432; Andoc. *Myst.* 43); in the old evidence, this wheel is not bound to Hades, but rotates "everywhere."

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The Concept and Purpose of Hell: Its Nature and Development in West Semitic Thought

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Abstract

A number of currents of thought gradually coalesced into the Judaeo-Christian conception of “hell.” This article attempts to relate them. The earliest traceable ideas involve a disembodied, subterranean existence of the common dead, or in exceptional cases total annihilation. Deceased kings were deified and continued to be involved in the affairs of the living, as in the Ugaritic funeral and *kispum* text KTU 1.161. This was parodied in Isaiah 14, which also indicates that such a belief was current, if criticised, in Israel-Judah. The theme of cosmic rebellion, wrongly traced to text KTU 1.6 i 43–67, actually emerged in such passages as Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28 and post-biblical derivative texts. The arrogant royal figure of such passages merged with the developing figure of Satan. The tradition of child sacrifice in Israel-Judah, performed at the *tophet* in the Valley of Hinnom, also contributed to the geography of hell in its Greek form *Gehenna*.

Keywords

annihilation, child sacrifice, fallen angels, Gehenna, hell, Sheol, theodicy

The theme of this issue, “the uses of hell,” suggests a utilitarian basis for the growth of conceptions and beliefs concerning the hereafter, as though an unconscious moral imperative underlay them. I suspect, however, that a variety of motives, certainly largely unconscious in origin, is to be discerned in the history of the idea, and the notion that the place, once conceptualized and thus reified in the minds of the ancients, could be put to good use in the inculcation and enforcement of social mores was more probably an unintended consequence than a driving force. There is also reason to think of a number of independent motifs, coalescing in the final Judaeo-Christian conceptions of hell. Each

contributed its own functional or purposive aspects, and the present paper seeks to identify them and assess their contribution to the whole.

When we examine the evidence from West Semitic religion, to which I shall largely limit my discussion for practical purposes, it appears to correspond very closely in terms of its broad architecture to similar attitudes and conceptions from the surrounding region — Greece, Egypt and Mesopotamia (and it is even worth asking whether we have here a pan-Mediterranean tradition with local variations: there was certainly early cross-fertilization of ideas, accompanying the widespread trade networks already attested by the early second millennium) — we find that the cosmos was generally imagined to be three-storied in construction. Even later multi-storeyed systems were only elaborations of the simpler model. In this structure, a disc-like habitable world divided the upper realm of sky and heavens (populated by the stars and weather systems, and their controlling deities) from the subterranean zone (source of rivers, the foundations of the mountains, and the dwelling place of the dead and of the infernal divine powers associated with them). The whole spherical form was embraced by the cosmic deep, itself conceptualized in almost amniotic terms.¹ In some variations, such as that exemplified in the Babylonian world map, to which Nanno Marinatos refers in considering early Greek thought, the realms of the dead appear to have lain *beyond* the ocean.

It is worth remarking that we should not look at our scraps of evidence as proofs of the canonical status of the various images used: for all we know, much of the surviving material represents speculative and exploratory ideas, always in a state of flux and development. And “hell” in the late Christian sense of the term, with everlasting fire, appears only towards the end of the process outlined here.

Creation was achieved according to a number of metaphors, perhaps the most spatially explicit being that of the *Chaoskampf*, exemplified by the *Enuma Eliš* narrative from Babylon, in which the boundaries of the cosmos were determined by the shape of the dismembered cadaver of

¹) For a thorough survey of the broad structures and metaphorical representations of the underworld in Ugaritic and Israelite thought see Tromp 1969. For a critique of a perceived tendency to see the *Chaoskampf* at every corner see R. Watson 2005, and for critique in turn of this, see Wyatt 2008. On cosmology in general see Wyatt 1996:19–115; 2001:53–157.

Tiamat. The merest echo of this persists in the account of Genesis 1, where the term *bārāʾ* (commonly translated “created” but retaining the sense of cutting asunder) hints at the original use of a sword to accomplish the divine purpose. Ugarit has not thus far provided an exemplar of this myth, though the so-called *Baal Cycle* (KTU 1.1–6, 10–11) is an example of the application of various motifs from the tradition to royal ideology (Wyatt 2005:151–89). But the Ugaritian is broadly in line with the biblical evidence. For our ulterior purpose, it is worth noting that the construction of the underworld as an integral part of the overall “cosmos” from a prior order of reality which in Mesopotamia at least was divine,² has important implications for understanding it as equally integral to any theological assessment of the nature of the various stages of human experience, including death and its sequel. That is, the existence of death and the underworld was factored into the construction of the world, and not conceived of as a later development, something whose existence could be called into question, as in later thought (e.g. Genesis 3, a fairly late composition in the Old Testament, in which death appears to enter into a previously immortal world).³ The tendency of much modern biblical scholarship to deny this “pagan” conceptual framework is unfortunate.

The *post-mortem* survival of human beings in the underworld in ancient thought was broadly homogeneous in the second millennium, with the sole clearly-documented exception of Egypt, where the idea of the judgment of the dead was already attested in the third millennium Pyramid Texts, from the fifth and sixth dynasties, as a well-established fate from which the king alone was exempt.⁴ In Mesopotamia, Ugarit, Israel and Greece, a shadowy wraith-like existence was endured, in which the deceased were likened to birds, or to people asleep, who would resent disturbance and interference from the living. The important feature is that this bare existence was common to all men, with the apparent exception in West Semitic thought of kings, who, perhaps under the cultural influence of Egypt, could look forward to some kind of divinity, as witnessed by the *Rapiuma* of Ugarit and their Israelite

² And Greece too, according to Hesiod, *Theogony* 119 (Tartarus), 123 (Erebos), 361 (Styx), 455 (Hades).

³ This is only explicitly so with reference to human beings.

⁴ See for instance PT 270, 486, spells uttered by the king.

counterparts the *Rephaim*.⁵ Dahood's valiant attempt to discern a beatific afterlife not only in the Hebrew Psalms,⁶ but in the older Ugaritic literature, is to be considered a magnificent failure.

Descriptions of the underworld and of its experience in antiquity were subject to ambiguity in the human reaction, ranging from dread to acceptance, and attempting to control the dimension by the application to it of metaphors drawn from the land of the living (for example, it was a city, a kingdom, with implications of order and justice, and so forth). Resignation seems to have been the overall assessment of most of the evidence, drawing attention to the few instances in which a protest was implicit in the depiction of abnormal deaths. Here are two examples of such a qualification, drawn respectively from Ugaritic and Hebrew literature: a dreadful fate (annihilation!) is the consequence of a dreadful crime.

- 1) Aqhat has dared to defy Anat, the goddess of war and hunting, by refusing her his bow, which she covets. He is given short shrift:

As Aqhat sat down to ea[t],
 the son of Danel to feed,
 above him (some) falcon[s] hovered,
 a flock of hawks[s] was watching.
 [Among] the falcons Anat hovered;
 above [Aqhat] she placed him.⁷

He hit him twice on [the skull],
 three times above the ear.
 He po[ured out] his blood [like] a murderer,
 like a slaughter[er (he brought him) to his knees].
 [His] life-breath went out like the wind,
 [like spittle] his vitality,
 as (his) dying breath from [his nostrils].

Anat [watched[?]] as his pulse stopped,
 [she looked on[?] as] Aqhat [died],
 and she wept for the ch[ild of Danel]:

⁵) For discussion see Rouillard 1995, 2005; Wyatt 2009 chapter 3.

⁶) Dahood 1981:XLII–LII. Cf. the later attempt by Spronk 1986.

⁷) Anat's hired assassin Yatipan.

“I understand
 that it was on account of your bow that I smote you,
 [and because of] your arrows that I st[ruck]⁸ you!”
 And the birds disappeared [].
 ...
 [The bow of Aqhat] came down into the midst of the waters;
 [the arrows of the hero] fell into the depths.
 Shattered was the bow [of Aqhat the hero²],
 shattered was “Precious,” [the bow of the son of Danel].
 Virgin Anat [came back²],
 [the Beloved of the Powerful One] returned.
 She picked up the quiver
 [] in his hands,
 as a singer a lyre in his finger<rs>.
 Like a chisel was her mouth:
 her teeth seized (him)
 and she devoured his [en]tails².
 She cleft him like the heart of a terebinth,
 and cut the cadaver in two.
 She divided his cadaver;
 She dismembered Aqhat.
 “He was put down like a mighty serpent,
 Like a huge viper in a sheepfold,
 (like) a dog deserving a stick I smote him.
 Now because of his bow I smote him;
 on account of his arrows I certainly struck him,
 yet his bow has not been given to me...”
 (KTU 1.18 iv 29–41, 1.19 i 1–16; Wyatt 2002:286–93, modified)

Here, if anything, is a fate worse than death visited upon Aqhat. We do hear later that his father Danel recovered the dismembered scraps of his corpse, and buried him. But for a moment, he was threatened with utter annihilation. And this is to be seen against the immediate context, in which Anat had offered him immortality of a new kind in exchange for his bow, which he had rejected out of hand as a preposterous notion.⁹

⁸) For this rendering cf. Wyatt 2007:157 and n.5, following the insight of W. G. E. Watson 2004.

⁹) KTU 1.17 vi 25–38:

- 2) A composite narrative in Numbers 16 describes the death of a group of dissident priests, who had challenged Moses' authority.¹⁰ The climax of the second story (Numbers 16:31b–32a, 33–34) ends thus:

Then the ground beneath them split open; and the underworld opened its mouth and swallowed them and their families. . . . And they and all who were with them went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the community. And at their cries all the Israelites around them fled, shouting, "We do not want the underworld to swallow us!"

The implicit personification in the mouth metaphor applied to the "underworld," or "earth," is to be noted. "Belial" (usually construed as "Worthlessness": *b'li ya'al*) was a name of the underworld. Here the verbal form *bāla'* is used of the mouth of the underworld, suggesting

"Ask for life, O hero Aqhat:
 ask for life and I shall give (it) you,
 immortality and I shall bestow (it) on you:
 I shall make you number (your) years with Baal:
 With the son of El you shall number months.
 'Like Baal he shall live indeed!
 Alive, he shall be feasted,
 he shall be feasted and given to drink.
 The minstrel shall intone and sing concerning him.'"

[And she] said to him:
 "Thus shall I make Aqhat the hero live!"

But Aqhat the hero replied:
 "Do not deceive me, O Virgin,
 for to a hero your deceit is rubbish!
 Man, (at his) end, what will he receive?
 What will he receive, a man (as his destiny)?
 Silver[?] will be poured on his head,
 gold[?] on top of his skull,
 [and] the death of all I shall die,
 and I shall surely die."

¹⁰ See Wyatt 1996:112–13: narratives concerning Korah (vv. 1a, 2bc–11, 16–24, 27, 35), and Dathan and Abihu (vv. 1b–2a, 12–15, 25–26, 28–32a, 33–34), the eponyms of various priestly orders, appear to have been conflated. Though such atomistic treatment of a text is frequently unconvincing, it seems to work well in this instance.

that for the writer it also evoked the concept “Swallower.” (Belial later developed into a sobriquet of the devil.)¹¹

Whether this story reflects an earthquake, or is to be seen as entirely supernatural, we cannot be sure (the former would in any case have been conceptualized in terms of the latter); but the imagery reflects a primitive and potent fear of dying, and being smothered by burial in the earth. The image generating the metaphor of swallowing is that of a mouth that devours all things.¹² This also suggests utter annihilation. These people suffer no ordinary fate.

Behind these two stories lies a moral judgment, however strange to modern eyes. Aqhat had blasphemed by his insolent response to Anat, while (Korah,) Dathan, Abihu and their companions had challenged the priestly authority of Moses and Aaron. People who stepped outside

¹¹) As perhaps in the War Scroll from Qumran, 1QM 1.1 (conveniently, Martínez 1994:95), which refers to “the army of Belial” (paralleling “the sons of darkness,” implying the identification with either a place [Sheol] or a person [Satan]). In *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* Beliar (var. Belial) appears to be the name of the devil (Charlesworth 1983–85, 1:779, 782 n.2a), although the precise wording in some passages still allows a topographical interpretation. See also among other passages *T. Reuben* 6:3, *T. Levi* 19:1, *T. Judah* 25:3, *T. Issachar* 6:1, *T. Zebulun* 9:8, *T. Dan* 4:7, 5:10–11, *T. Naphtali* 3:1, *T. Asher* 1:9, 3:2, *Jubilees* 1:20, 15:33, 2 Corinthians 6:15, etc.

¹²) The metaphor already appears in the *Baal* cycle, where Mot, the divine personification of death, boasts to Baal (KTU 1.5 i 4–8 = [31–35]):

When I tear you in pieces:
I shall devour (you),
elbows, blood and forearms;
You will indeed go down into the throat of divine Mot,
into the maw of the Beloved of El, the hero.

This experience is set within a broader context in KTU 1.4 viii 10–24, where Baal’s messengers are to enter the underworld, but avoid coming into contact with Mot. Cf. also KTU 1.6 ii 17–18, where Mot says:

My appetite felt the want of human beings,
my appetite the multitudes of the earth.

The all-devouring nature of Mot’s mouth is explicit in this passage (KTU 1.5 ii 2–3):

[He extended a lip to the under]world,
a lip to the heavens,
[he extended] a tongue to the stars.

the conventional mores of their cultural environment could not be allowed to remain within it. Ancient societies were without exception totalitarian. A social judgment, of utter exclusion, was visited upon them. We can see here an inchoate grasping at the “use,” or social function, to which hell would later be put: that is, it provided a warning against dissent. And it is perhaps no accident that issues of conventional morality, of right or wrong, are not necessarily involved: it is primarily a question of the *compatibility* of such persons with society at large. It is not unlike the later attitude taken toward heretics.

This is one strand in the theme whose prehistory we are examining. Another important one is not ultimately dissimilar, because it has the same concern for loyalty and dissidence. This may be summarized under the rubric of “the myth of cosmic rebellion,” the title of Hugh Page’s monograph on the subject (Page 1996). A large amount of material, biblical and post-biblical, has been associated with this motif,¹³ and an Ugaritic antecedent has been discerned by some. Page however appears to have misconstrued the evidence. He understood the narrative in the *Baal cycle*, KTU 1.6 i 43–67,¹⁴ to describe the god Athtar’s ascent on to Baal’s throne, from which he then went down to the *under-*

¹³ Gen 6:1–4; Isa 14; Ps 82; 1 En. 6–16, 19, 39:1, 64, 69, 86:1–6; 2 En. 7, 56:12–15; and allusions elsewhere. The Psalm 82 reference should not appear here. It has an entirely different, historical, reference: Wyatt 1996:357–65.

¹⁴ KTU 1.6 i 50–67, with ascent likewise followed by descent, read:

“Let the finest of pigments be ground,
let the people of Baal prepare unguents,
the people of the Son of Dagan crushed herbs.”

The Great Lady-who-tramples-Yam replied:
“Indeed, let us make Athtar the Brilliant king:
Athtar the Brilliant shall rule!”

Then Athtar the Brilliant went up into the uttermost parts of Saphon;
he sat on the throne of Valiant Baal.
But his feet did not reach the footstool;
his head did not come up to its top.

Then Athtar the Brilliant said:
“I shall not rule in the uttermost parts of Saphon!”

world to reign (Page 1996:91, 103).¹⁵ This descent from heaven to hell was thus, in Page's broader discussion, the paradigm for later developments.

The key to the problem here is the precise nuance recognized of *arṣ* in line 65. While it is sometimes ambiguous, and can mean either "earth" or "underworld," I think that here it is univocal, and has the former sense. Page translated it as "Underworld," that is, the latter sense, understanding an implicit rejection of Athtar's claims with regard to Baal's throne. On my understanding, however, he entirely misread the evidence, for the narrative is the paradigm for the rites of inauguration of the human institution of kingship in Ugarit. Further searches by Page in the Ugaritic corpus were equally fruitless. And while insisting several times on the existence of a "Canaanite prototype" of the later material, dealing with cosmic rebellion, he had to concede each time that he had not actually found it in any of the texts he discussed!¹⁶ And none of his other suggestions are convincing, either, so far as continuity is concerned, though some passages, such as Ezekiel 28 (two oracles) appear to envisage a deposition of an overweening king, which appears to be the prototype of later traditions of fallen angels and demoniacal rebellion. This may or may not have been "Canaanite" in origin. Though

Athtar the Brilliant came down,
 he came down from the throne of Valiant Baal,
 and ruled in the earth (*arṣ*), god of it all.

[they d]rew water from amphorae,
 [they drew] water from vases.

¹⁵ In the Bergen meeting, Mark Geller averred that Page was right on this, that Athtar did indeed go down to the underworld (to reign), comparing his downward trajectory to Ishtar's descent into the underworld. But everything in the narrative tells against this: there is no rebellion: nor is there any extant West Semitic version of Ishtar's descent. And why would he go? In favour of a kingship upon earth: Athtar was appointed by his mother (a lovely example of matrilineal royal succession!); he sat on the royal god's throne (Baal's); he was anointed; fertility rituals with water were performed in conclusion (cf. Ps 110:7). See discussion in Wyatt 2005:221–30.

¹⁶ Page 1996:139: "the fact that there is no Ugaritic evidence of a revolt by Athtar against El is a troublesome, though not devastating, datum. The mythological allusions in the poem are of Canaanite origin"; an assessment repeated with regard to a number of biblical texts at 147, 158, 163, 164, 187, 200 and 204. Where is the evidence for this unsubstantiated claim?

these passages bear *some* relationship to the Ugaritic material, they have already become parodies of royal ideology.

But there is one text from Ugarit that *is* best construed as the background to one of the most intriguing of biblical texts, the oracle of Isa 14. This is Ugaritic text KTU 1.161, which provides the liturgy for the burial of King Niqmaddu III–IV, the penultimate king of Ugarit before the city's destruction in about 1188 BCE.

Here are the two texts for comparison:

KTU 1.161¹⁷

Order of service for the sacrifice(s)
of the (divine) Shades:

“You are invoked, O Rapiuma of
the under[world],
you are summoned, O assembly
of Di[danu].

Invoked is Ulkanu the Rapiu;
invoked is Tarumanu the Rapiu.
invoked is Sidanu-and-Radanu;
invoked is the eternal one²,
Tharu.

They have been invoked, the
ancient Rapiuma.

You are invoked, O Rapiuma of the
underworld,
you are summoned, assembly of
Didanu.

Invoked is Ammithamru the king
(and) invoked as well is
Niqmaddu the king.

O throne of Niqmaddu, may you be
mourned!

And lamented be his footstool.
Let the table of the king be
mourned in his presence.

But let their tears be swallowed,
and their dreadful lamentations.

¹⁷⁾ For translation and commentary see Wyatt 2002:430–41.

Go down, Shapshu,
 yea, go down, Great Luminary!
 May Shapshu shine upon him.

After your lords, from the throne,
 After your lords into the
 underworld go down:
 into the underworld go down
 and fall into the dust,
 down to Sidanu-and-Radanu,
 down to the eternal one, Tharu,
 down to the *anci-ent* Rapiuma,
 down to Ammithamru the king
 and also down to Niqmadu the king.”

One — and make an offering,
 two — and make an offering,
 three — and make an offering,
 four — and make an offering,
 five — and make an offering,
 six — and make an offering,
 seven — and make an offering.
 You shall present a bird.

“Peace!
 Peace on Ammurapi,
 and peace on his son(s);
 peace on his kinsmen,
 peace on his house;
 peace on Ugarit,
 peace on her gate(s)!”

In this liturgy, recent past kings (*mlkm*: *malikūma*) and legendary kings of yore (*rpum*: *rāpiūma*), both categories of minor gods, are invoked to come up from the underworld into the threshold of the tomb, where they are to greet the newly deceased monarch, and accompany him to his rest.

The text above provides an unprecedented, though still widely ignored, insight into the text of Isaiah 14. This oracle is a taunt addressed to a great king, variously identified as Assyrian, Babylonian or Persian. It envisages the king's entry into the underworld. Here are selected verses (9–15, 18–20a):

Sheol below stirred
 to greet you at your coming.
 The Rephaim were astir on your account, all the rulers of the earth;
 there arose from their thrones all the kings of the nations.
 All of them respond
 and say to you:
 “Have you too been slain like us?
 Are you to be compared to us?
 Your pomp has been brought down to Sheol,
 your circumstance has been put to death.
 Beneath you is a bed of maggots,
 and your blanket is worms.”
 How did you fall from the heavens, Morning Star, son of the dawn?
 And how were you thrown down to the earth, destroyer of nations?
 For you used to say in your heart,
 “I shall ascend to heaven:
 above the stars of El I shall exalt my throne,
 and I shall sit on the Mount of Assembly,
 in the recesses of Saphon!
 I shall climb up onto the backs of the clouds,
 I shall rival the Most High!”
 But now you are cast down into Sheol,
 into the depths of the pit!
 ...
 All the kings of the nations, every one of them, lie in honour, each in his tomb.
 But *you* have been thrown out of your grave, a loathsome branch¹⁸ ...
 ...
You will not be gathered with them in the burial-place.

The whole force of this bitter satire lies in its parody of royal funeral rites, suggesting that Judahite ritual practice conformed to the broad pattern of the Ugaritic material. When performed with due solemnity, the king is gathered to his royal ancestors, joining their divine company for future intercession on behalf of their former subjects. *This* king, however, will go unburied, with all the horrors that this implies: loss of prestige, loss of power, loss of identity, loss of all hope, annihilation.¹⁹

I think that this material and its *Vorlage* is the background against which the oracles in Ezekiel 28 are to be read. If there is some aspect of

¹⁸) Often an arboreal metaphor for a king.

¹⁹) There is an implicit Ugarit expression of this fear of annihilation in the line of the duties of the righteous son in *Aqhat* (KTU 1.17 i 27–28, 45–46, ii 1–2, 17):

enthronement rites lying behind the self-aggrandizement of these foreign kings, there may of course be a tenuous, if indirect, connection with the Ugaritic material, but the passages cannot be directly dependent upon it, because they already parody it. And several centuries separate the two forms, which could provide endless possibilities for intermediate invention. But perhaps a more important influence in developing thought is one curious snatch of myth embedded in Genesis 6:1–4, in what now appears to provide the reason for the flood in the biblical narrative. This reads as follows:

Now when men began to increase in number on earth, daughters were born to them. And the gods (lit. “sons of God”) saw how beautiful women (or: “Adam’s daughters”) were, and they took such as they chose as wives. Then Yahweh said, “my breath shall not remain in man forever, since he is also flesh. Let his lifespan be 120 years.” Now the Fallen Ones (*nʿpilīm*) were on earth in those days, and it was after this that the gods consorted with women, who bore them children. These were the heroes of yore, the men of renown.

The precise manner in which this invention took place is impossible to describe with confidence, because it is inherently difficult to date biblical texts, and old ideas might well be embedded in younger texts. And on the way, various external influences by adjacent cultures may well have contributed nudges here and there.

The royal figure we encounter in Isaiah 14, given the title *hēlāl ben šaḥar*, “Morning Star, son of the dawn,” *Lucifer* in the Vulgate, became by association with another figure, the heavenly accuser in the divine court, *haśśāṭān* (who appears for the first time in Job), the Devil (διάβολος: in origin the same legal function) of late Judaism and early Christianity. A figure who might have remained simply a legal functionary in later judgment scenes was gradually caught up in the “fall” mythology, becoming himself a rebel and deposed.

into the underworld sending forth his dying breath,
into the dust protecting his progress....

This passage deals not with rescuing the dead *from* the underworld, but with keeping them *down* there (Husser 1995). Burial was essential for the long-term good of the dead as well as the living; see Brichito 1973.

The critical period ca. 165 BCE to 200 CE spawned a considerable number of “fall” narratives, inspired by materials such as these. We should spend a moment considering the reasons for the explosion in speculation that now took place.

While scholars have broadly sought in vain to find clear evidence of any influence, it should be remembered that post-exilic Judaism developed during two centuries of Persian imperial control of *Jehud*. It is scarcely possible that the Jews remained entirely unaware of the Zoroastrian interest in eschatology, a concept hitherto alien to Jewish thought.²⁰ The polarization of the hereafter into heaven and hell, with appropriate rewards for the good and the wicked, could then develop its own momentum and particular conceptualizations in the troubled Maccabean period and the continuing civil and religious strife that still characterized Judaism in the early Christian era. It was following the Maccabean crisis (second century BCE), when Antiochus IV Epiphanes began the active persecution of the Jews for refusing to recant, that a narrative such as *4 Maccabees* 8–18 (final version first century CE) could be composed, narrating the martyrdom of a widow’s sons, each of whom, as he expired, gave a ringing endorsement of new and revolutionary beliefs concerning the hereafter.

The youngest, having watched his brothers tortured to death by fire, said to the king (12:12):

In return for this (impiety), justice will hold you in store for a fiercer and an everlasting fire and for torments which will never let you go for all time. (Trans. Anderson, in Charlesworth 1983–85, 2:557)

But this is a later passage, contemporaneous with early Christian language about the hereafter, of which some of the most graphic comes in the gospels (below).

²⁰ Cf. Zaehner 1961:57–58. He was right to point out that we know next to nothing about general developments in Zoroastrian thought in the Achaemenid period, so that the debt remains unquantifiable; but he considered that in eschatological matters there is a case to answer. Fire, as in the Lake of Fire, was strictly part of a judgmental process rather than a destination for the damned, whose abode was rather icy coldness (*ibid.* 307–8). Hell was in any case temporal in Zoroastrian thought, since the final Rehabilitation (*Frashkart*) redeemed all souls.

1 *Enoch* 6–16, a pre-Maccabean composition (Isaac, in Charlesworth 1983–85, 1:7), is modelled on Genesis 6:1–4, but the gods of Genesis have become angels, and this is a version of their fall. They fathered children on women, and the giants begotten of this miscegenation became carnivorous (men were herbivorous before the flood) and even drank blood (7:5), the unforgivable sin! They taught men the elements of culture, evidently also a great sin (7:1b; Azazel did it in 8:1 and other angels in 8:3, and later in ch. 64). The flood was announced (10:2), and Azazel was bound and cast out into darkness (10:4–6), where Enoch told him he was beyond redemption (13:1–3).

This is typical of apocalyptic literature: it is very confused, repetitive and contradictory.

1 *Enoch* 86–88 (165–1 BCE; Isaac, in Charlesworth 1983–85, 1:7) is the prologue to a typical apocalyptic panorama, running through to the present time, the Maccabean revolt, in ch. 90. It describes how the angels descended as bulls, and mated with cows, who bore various species, which the bulls then proceeded to devour. Then four heavenly beings (one, a person, is God) appeared, and one of them seized the first star (angels > bulls > stars) and cast him into an abyss (“narrow and deep, empty and dark,” 88:1). The animals on earth were then armed, and attacked each other, while one of the four figures bound other stars and “cast them into the pits of the earth” (88:2–3).

2 *Enoch* 7 describes a vision in which, now in the second heaven (of seven), the sage sees guarded prisoners hanging (suspended), “waiting for the measureless judgment.”

A range of descriptions of the underworld is found in the apocalyptic literature.

We now move on to the theme of child sacrifice, which while seeming to be tangential to our theme, contributed an important motif, as we shall see. Allusions to rites of child sacrifice are surprisingly common in the Old Testament. In spite of the fact that there are clear pointers to its historical association with the cult of Yahweh, such as the ritual prescriptions of Exodus 13:2, 11–15, 34:19–20; Leviticus 18:21, 20:2–5; Numbers 3:11–13, 13–18 and 18:15, it is evident from most references that the rite was regarded with horror by the biblical writers. In fact there is a distinct bias towards presenting it as something inherently alien to Israelite religion, practised by Israel’s enemies, and just occasionally,

and deplorably, adopted locally. Thus in the somewhat tedious account of the dreadful crimes of King Manasseh, the strange expression “he shed innocent blood” is used a number of times (2 Kings 21:16 etc.), in a strikingly vague way compared with the precision of other charges of cultic crimes laid against him. F. Stavrakopoulou (2004) convincingly argued that this referred to child sacrifice.

Examples of the “foreign” — non-Israelite — practice of such cults can be found. Carthage is of course infamous for its ritual centre the Tophet, associated with thousands of deposits of children’s ashes, and in spite of efforts to deny the presence of child-sacrifice, the evidence is strongly in support of it.²¹ In the Levant, King Mesha of Moab, at war with Israel in the ninth century, sacrificed his son on the city wall during a siege, presumably to the national deity Chemosh, which apparently forced the Israelite army to withdraw (2 Kings 3:27):²²

He offered him up as a holocaust on the (city) wall.

But in a similar time of crisis, King Ahaz of Judah appears to have done the same, though the terminology is different:

He passed his son through fire according to the abominable practices of foreign peoples. (2 Kings 16:3)

The expression “to pass someone through fire” is used of the ritual actions by the kings of Israel (2 Kings 17:17) and of individual kings, here and in 2 Kings 21:6 of Manasseh of Judah himself. In spite of the writer’s attempt here to represent it as foreign, it evidently went on right outside the walls of Jerusalem, for Josiah, during his iconoclastic reforms ca. 620 BCE,

desecrated the Tophet, which is in the Valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom (*gê ben/bʿnê hinnôm*), to prevent people from passing their sons or daughters through fire *lammolek*. (2 Kings 23:10)

²¹) See the current website with arguments on both sides by M. H. Fantar and L. Stager with J. A. Greene: <http://phoenicia.org/childsacrifice.html>.

²²) See discussion and references in Dearman 1989:229–31.

The expression “passing (sons) though the fire” also occurs in Jeremiah 15:14, 32:35, Ezekiel 16:21, 20:26 and 20:31. In Ezekiel 23:37 the formula is,

They have passed the children they bore for me over to them (sc. other deities) as food.

This passage also confirms the suspicion that it relates to the sacrificial offering of children, as holocausts, and not merely some innocuous purification rite.

There has been much debate concerning the form *lammolek* occurring in Leviticus 18:21, 20:2–5 (four times), 1 Kings 11:7, 2 Kings 23:10 and Jeremiah 32:35 (eight times in all), always in the context of a burnt offering. In an influential paper, O. Eissfeldt (1935)²³ argued that the old view — already implicitly espoused by MT with its vocalization — that it denoted a god (sc. “Molech,” “Moloch,” Malik etc.) was untenable. Instead, it denoted a type of votive offering (*molk*), involving the sacrifice of children. More recently, G. Heider (1985) and J. Day (1989) attempted to refute Eissfeldt’s view. F. Stavrakopoulou later championed it, but went further, and argued that despite efforts by biblical writers to deflect suspicions, it was Yahweh himself who demanded and received such offerings.²⁴ She also isolated three distinct forms: the

²³) See also the important dissertation of P. Mosca (1975).

²⁴) See for instance Jeremiah 7:31–32:

“For the Judahites have done evil in my sight” (declares the) oracle of Yahweh. “They have set up their abominations in the temple dedicated to me (‘called by my name’), so polluting it. And they have constructed *tophet* cultic structures (*bāmôt hattōpet*) in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom (*gē ben-hinnōm*), to burn their sons and daughters in the fire, which I never demanded and never considered in my heart...”

and also Jeremiah 19:3–5, 11–13:

“They [the inhabitants of Jerusalem] have forsaken me and made this shrine foreign to me, and have made offerings in it to other deities whom they have not known, they, their ancestors and the kings of Judah; and they have filled this shrine with innocent blood. And they have built cultic structures (*bāmôt*) to the Baal, which I never demanded and never authorized and never considered in my heart...”

sacrifice of the firstborn, the *molk* sacrifice (fulfilment of vows), and offerings to “the Shadday gods,” the form *šaddayim* (of whom El Shaddai is the type) being distorted into masoretic *šēdīm*, “demons.”

An important recurrent key term in these passages is *tōpet*, “tophet,” the term also used in the Punic context. It has so far defied satisfactory etymological clarification.²⁵ Heider (1985:349) appealed to Isaiah 30:33,²⁶ which at least gave a description of it, even if it left certain details unexplained. This has a bearing on our broader discussion:

For a Tophet²⁷ has long been made ready; he too is destined for a *molk* offering, wide and deep is his fire-pit, with much fire and firewood; Yahweh's breath burns in it like a river of sulphur.

This description supports Robertson Smith's view that *tōpet* is cognate with Arabic *ʿotfiya* and Syriac *tfā ya*, “stones on which a pot is set, and then any stand or tripod set upon a fire,”²⁸ even though this explanation is now generally rejected. The idea can be traced back to J. D. Michaelis in 1786. P. Haupt (1918), in taking up the idea, opined that the name of the so-called Dung-Gate (Vg *Portam Stercoris*) leaving the city just west of the temple mount (see below) — *šāʿar hāʾāšpôt* — actually meant “Tophet Gate.” But even if the etymological link of *ʾāšpôt* with *tōpet* be rejected, it would still have the sense of “Garbage Gate,” or “Ash Gate,” as the means by which rubbish was taken out from the city. He also pointed out (1918:233) that the gate also had other names: *šāʿar ḥaršīt*, the “Pottery Gate,” Greek Πύλη Κεραμική, since it also went out into the Tyropoean Valley, in turn known as the Potters' Field: Matthew 27:7, and the Field of Blood — bought with the thirty pieces

Thus says Yahweh of hosts, “So shall I smash this people and this city [Jerusalem], as the potter smashes a pot which is beyond repair. And they will be buried (reading *yiqqāb-rû* for MT *yiqb-rû*) in Tophet until there is no more room for burying. . . . This is what I shall do to this shrine,” oracle of Yahweh, “and to its inhabitants: I shall make this city like Tophet, and the houses of Jerusalem and the palaces of the kings of Judah will become polluted like the shrine of the Tophet. . . .”

²⁵ Summary in Heider 1985:346–50; Day 1989:24–28; Stavrakopoulou 2004:152–53; *HALOT* iv 1781.

²⁶ On Isaiah 30:27–33 see Stavrakopoulou 2004:201–5.

²⁷ MT *topteh*, RSV “burning place”; perhaps “his Tophet”?

²⁸ Robertson Smith 1927:377 n.2; cited Heider 1985:348.

of silver after Judas hanged himself: Matthew 27:8; or where he died by spontaneous disembowelling: Acts 1:19 — Aramaic *'akel dāmā'*, “Field of Blood.” The point of these allusions was that pottery spoil-heaps were located there, that is, rubbish tips, and it was also a convenient place for executions, assuming that the Judas connection is a Christian aetiology.

Another key term, the location to which the city gate led, is *gê ben* or *b'ne hinnōm*, “the valley of the son (or: sons) of Hinnom.” The origin of this toponym, and the identity of the person, are entirely lost. However, its location is well known. It is a valley (Wadi el Rahabi, Jahan-nam) leaving the Kidron valley at the south end of the old “City of David” and Silwan, which lies south of the temple platform in Jerusalem, and skirting the present Mount Zion, going west up to just north of the railway station.²⁹ It was reached directly by leaving the city by the so-called Dung Gate, discussed above, just west of today's Wailing Wall.

A pre-Christian³⁰ witness to the cosmology which became attached to the Valley is found in *1 Enoch* 26–27. Uriel, guiding Enoch round Jerusalem, explains in answer to his enquiry,

This accursed valley is for those accursed forever; here shall come together all (those) accursed ones, those who speak with their mouth unbecoming words against the Lord and utter hard words concerning his glory. Here shall they be gathered together, and here shall be their judgment in the last days...³¹

It appears here that the valley was to be the location of this judgment (Bauckham 1990:359 and n.13), and not (yet) simply a symbol of some transcendent location. This suggests a continuity of thought from the time of the active cults located there.³²

²⁹) It can be seen very clearly online on Google Earth.

³⁰) Discussing the date of *1 Enoch*, Isaac, in Charlesworth 1983–85, 1:7, omitted reference to these chapters. Bauckham (1990:358) gave a date of third or early second century BCE.

³¹) Translation Isaac in Charlesworth 1983–85, 1:27. Note the futuristic aspect: judgment will be at the eschaton. This contrasts with the implication of some “tours of hell,” in which the seer evidently sees punishments already being inflicted (Bauckham 1990:357).

³²) Note the independent location of hell in *2 Enoch* 40:12 (J). But this is probably a much later text: F. I. Andersen in Charlesworth 1983–85, 1:94–95.

The New Testament renders *Gê... Hinnôm* by Γέεννα, “*Gehenna*,” a term which has become a name for hell. Both Old and New Testaments use other terminology, such as Hades, Sheol, the Pit, the Grave, and so on. By the time of early Christianity they seem to have more or less coalesced in meaning, though they will have had slightly different shades of meaning. While *Gehenna* occurs 10 times in the gospels (Matthew 5:22, 29, 10:28, 18:9, 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5 and also in James 3:6), *Hades* occurs 11 times (Matthew 11:23, 16:18; Luke 10:15, 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; 1 Corinthians 15:55; Revelation 1:18, 6:8, 20:13, 14). This suggests a conception, probably still fairly fluid, which shares elements of contemporary Greek and Roman cosmology, themselves heirs to the Mediterranean *koine*, together with Jewish elements, which themselves seem to have absorbed earlier Egyptian or even Zoroastrian ideas (such as the Lake of Fire). The latter is certainly a good candidate, though it is hard to quantify the debt. At all events, there is no certain corroboration of Iranian influence, even if it was perhaps catalytic, and the old Judahite cultic associations give an independent source for the fiery image.

The fiery nature of the place becomes clear in passages such as the following:

He (Jesus) will baptize you {with the Holy Spirit and}³³ with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will sweep his threshing floor, and collect his wheat in the granary, but the chaff he will burn in unquenchable fire. (Matthew 3:11–12; cf. Luke 3:16–17)

...and they (the angels) will throw them into the furnace of fire: there, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth... (Matthew 13:42 [= 49–50]; see also Matthew 18:8–9 [= Mark 9:43–45], and 25:41)

(anyone who worships the Beast) will be tortured in fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb. (Revelation 14:10)

(the Beast and the false prophet) were both thrown alive into the lake of fire burning with sulphur. (Revelation 19:20:)

³³) Probably an expansion of the original. Originally John's water would be matched by Jesus' fire. It was to be vivifying for the grain, but destructive for the chaff. On the selective nature of fire cf. Daniel 3:22–27.

In these, such is the developed form of the imagery that an Iranian substrate is perhaps arguable. However, this language is interestingly absent from the Pauline corpus.

We should not assume that the image of a fiery pit or lake of fire was the only one entertained. *The Apocalypse of Peter*, for example, a text from the second or third century CE, used this figure, but combined it with vivid accounts of other lakes, of pitch and mud, and images of people with their eyes put out, or gnawing their lips or tongues and so forth, reflecting the whole gamut of the practice of torture.

We may conclude this survey of shifting beliefs (and the shifting probably never stopped) with a brief consideration of the reasons for change. After all, religions are the most conservative features of culture: we do not expect them to change for change's sake.

In his study on gnosticism, *The Gnostic Religion*, Hans Jonas drew attention to the way in which the growth of large regional empires in the Near East (from Assyria and Babylon down to Rome and Persia) stifled local initiatives and sterilized local cultures. But the policy, whether deliberate or merely consequential, had one interesting outcome. Even as each empire fell, and as each local culture was crushed, a general process ensued:

On the one hand, it favored the disengagement of cultural contents from their native soil, their abstraction into the transmissible form of teachings, and their consequently becoming available as elements in a cosmopolitan interchange of ideas...

...the Babylonian exile forced the Jews to develop that aspect of their religion whose validity transcended the particular Palestinian conditions and to oppose the creed thus extracted in its purity to the other religious principles of the world into which they had been cast. This meant a confrontation of ideas with ideas...

Political uprooting thus led to a liberation of spiritual substance.³⁴

Ancient Israelite religion had been a typical state-maintenance system, an ideology for monarchical power in an independent city-state. With a succession of rapacious great powers in control from the early sixth century, at times actively persecuting religious dissidents, a whole maelstrom of ideas coalesced in an increasing obsession with theodicy — if

³⁴) Jonas 1963, excerpts from 11–17. See also the assessment in Wyatt 2001:329–32.

God was not guilty, what was he going to do about it? — and eschatology, a progressive despair in any this-worldly vindication of local rights — if there was no redemption or just desserts in this life, there must surely be such in the hereafter. Such an intellectual development must have been going on concurrently with developing views of human rights and responsibilities in jurisprudence. In some respects, the fantastic explorations of Apocalyptic may also be regarded as serious if inchoate enquiries into the nature and implications of moral theology, seeking appropriate figures for the punishments due for the various classes of sin. They were comparable³⁵ to Virgil's *Aeneid* book 6, which asked similar questions. Viewed from another angle, such enquiries, which in Apocalyptic were balanced by visions of heaven, allow us to see a continuation of the most ancient patterns of religiosity, represented by shamanism, with its journeys to the limits of the universe, its seeking for knowledge, and its profound if unconscious desire to transcend the limitations of human earthly experience.³⁶

Thus in the period between *ca* 200 BCE and 200 CE, which saw the rise of Christianity and the development of post-temple Judaism, all the currents of thought we have described gradually converged in the development of what can loosely be called a 'doctrine of hell'. Speculations on its nature continued for centuries.

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³⁵ Himmelfarb (1983) and Bauckham (1990) both argued that Jewish Apocalyptic was not dependent on earlier Orphic or Pythagorean speculation (*contra* Dieterich 1913). But there does appear to have been a commonwealth of ideas (Greek, Babylonian, Iranian, Jewish, Roman, and Egyptian thought, expressed in the *Book of the Dead*) in vogue, none of them developing in complete isolation from the others.

³⁶ Note the use made of shamanic psychology in Davila 2001, an enquiry into the Hekhalot literature.

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The So-called Hell and Sinners in the Odyssey and Homeric Cosmology

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Abstract

It will be argued in this paper that Odysseus does not descend into Hades even though he witnesses the punishment of certain sinners and that the latter are envisaged in the sky as constellations. This hypothesis explains the phrase “meadow of asphodels” and the repetitive action of the sinners.

It will also be argued that the origin of this cosmology is Egyptian. The Homeric cosmos is divided into a diurnal and nocturnal world: a human habitation and one which lies beyond the sun’s orbit and contains the heroes and the dead.

Keywords

cosmos, Hades, asphodels, Circe, Odysseus, Sisyphe

1. Odysseus Crosses the Ocean

Odysseus is told to go to Hades by Circe in Book 10 of the *Odyssey*. The instructions he receives show clearly that this journey will not involve a descent to the underworld, but rather a crossing of the cosmic river Ocean; Hades lies on the other side (fig. 1). This is confirmed in the *Iliad* when Patroclus tells Achilles that because he is not buried he is prevented from crossing the river and entering Hades (*Il.* 23.73).¹

Circe says that Odysseus and his men will cross the Ocean by ship. They will leave the vessel on the other bank and walk on foot until they

¹) Note however that there exist other rivers in the afterworld; see fig. 1.

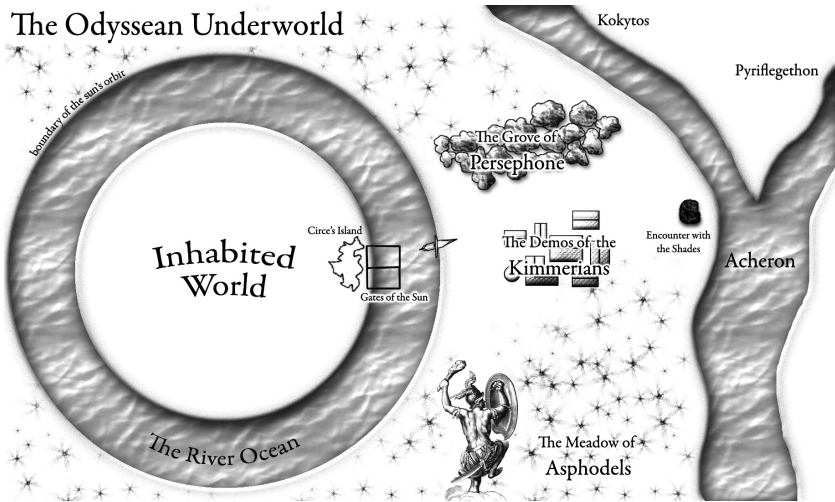


Figure 1. The route of Odysseus across the Ocean. (Drawing Catherine Chaton)

arrive at a spot where a pit is to be dug. Then, they will make sacrifices and invoke the shades.

The hero does as he is told by Circe; indeed, one by one the ghosts gather around the pit (11.36). There is an implication that they come from underneath by the expression *hypex* or *hypo* “from under” (11.37, 57) but their place of origin is far from clear.²

All the *psychai* or *eidola* are recognized by Odysseus, which is due to the fact that they are duplicates of what they were in life (cf. also *Il.* 23.104) (Bremmer 1983). However, *they do not recognize him*. Why so? It is because they have lost their memory. Circe clearly tells Odysseus that Teiresias alone has kept his mind, a gift granted to him by Persephone (10.490–95), and it is for this reason that he alone is able to recognize Odysseus even before he drinks blood (11.91).

There is a profound insight into the nature of death behind the description of these ineffective spirits: Homer is saying that without memory, there is no identity. In consequence, the dead do not and cannot suffer because they have no consciousness. Suffering entails either

² For the vertical dimension of ascent-descent into Hades see West 1997.

bodily pain or mental anguish, but these ghosts experience neither of these feelings: they are in a state of oblivion.

Our first conclusion is that in the *Odyssey* we find no descent into the underworld and that although Hades is a sunless world, it is not entirely dark. Rather, it may be described as a place of perpetual dusk and mist (*zofos* 11.155) containing groves of poplars and meadows of asphodels, and even a city (fig. 1). We also learn that it is the habitat of shades without memory. For the rest, it is not an unpleasant place to be in; nor is it horrifying.

2. The Transgressors

Now we come to a different issue, which has to do with the categories of the dead and their respective location within Hades. In addition to the shades, Odysseus sees a set of heroes who are not interested in blood, and who do not talk to Odysseus; moreover, they belong to the remote past, to the generation before the Trojan War.

First he sees Minos holding his scepter seated in judgment among the dead (11.568). Since Minos is seated, he is not parading like the ghosts of the previous section. Then, he sees huge Orion hunting with his dogs in the meadow of asphodels (11. 573). Orion is not described as a transgressor in this passage, but elsewhere in the poem it is stated that he slept with Eos, an act the gods do not approve of (5.274). He is also considered an ill omen: in the *Iliad*, the appearance of the star called “dog of Orion” does not bode well (*Il.* 22. 29–300).

Next, Odysseus sees Tityos lying on nine *pelethra*. Since a *pelethron* is a measure of about a hundred square feet, Tityos must have been enormous. Fixed in the same position, he is eaten by the vultures. An explanation of why he is being punished in eternity is added: he had attempted to violate Leto (11.580).

The next figure is Tantalos standing by a lake from which he cannot get water to quench his thirst. Around him are trees, but he cannot reach their fruit (11.581–92). We are not told what sin he had committed.

Sisyphos is seen next, holding a huge rock with both hands and pushing it uphill while sweat is pouring down his face (11.593–600).

Next, Odysseus sees Heracles, but now a new element is introduced: he is able to have a conversation with him. For this reason Heracles

does not belong to the category under discussion; the group ends with Sisyphos.

The group of the aforementioned four transgressors, plus the judge Minos, form a distinct unit, which ought to be differentiated from the parade of ghosts. While the latter converse with Odysseus, the transgressors are engaged in repetitive action as though they were fixed forever on a rotating wheel.

The question is where does Odysseus see these figures? As we have seen, he does not move from his position. The puzzle has been noted by important scholars, such as U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, and is addressed anew by Walter Burkert in this issue. W. B. Stanford, in his commentary of the *Odyssey*, suggests that the passage is an interpolation, perhaps from Orphic sources (Stanford 1964:401).

Then, there is the question where is the meadow of asphodels in which Orion and Achilles are located (11.539)? And how come the transgressor Orion is situated in such a meadow of white flowers?

3. The Meadow of Asphodels as Stars

A crucial clue as to how we may interpret the meadow of asphodels is given in the Homeric poems themselves. Orion is a constellation in the sky in both the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* (*Il.* 13.488; *Od.* 5.274; *Il.* 21.39). Could it be that all the other transgressors and their judge Minos are visions seen in the night sky? (I do not count Achilles in this category.) This would explain why they do not converse with Odysseus.

There are several reasons why this hypothesis works. First, Plutarch identifies Orion with the Egyptian constellations of Horus and Seth (*De Iside et Osiride*, 21–22), and although Plutarch lived much later than the poet of *Odyssey*, his testimony is useful because he links astral Orion with Egyptian mythology. Second, the sinners repeat their action in perpetuity: Orion keeps hunting with his dogs; Sisyphos keeps pushing the stone; Tantalos attempts to drink from the lake. Third, Odysseus cannot talk to these heroes because they are in the sky; interaction with them is not possible. However, he does see them clearly in their true form, as though he had been initiated into some truth.

Consider also the Bacchic tablet from Thurii where the deceased happily declares: “I have flown out of the heavy difficult circle (*stephanos*)” (Graf

and Johnston 2007, no. 5, 12–13). The circle implies repetitive action, which the soul wants to escape, and it suits the constellation theory well. Finally there is a passage in the *Iliad* referring to constellations that never set and therefore never bathe in the Ocean. Note that Orion is one of them. The text implies that they are envisaged as a circle in heaven (*ouranos estephanotai*, 18.486–89).

Combining all the above and following the hint by Plutarch, we turn to Egypt to explore the tradition of mythical constellations in the afterlife.

First of all it is important to start with the term for the beyond, *duat* in Egyptian. Its location (under the earth or inside the vault of heaven) was a matter of speculation and varied from period to period; moreover there were differences of opinion even within the same period.³ For example, during the Pyramid age it was imagined to be in the sky. The Pyramid texts attest to the fact that the pharaoh ascended to the sky or flew to it after death and became a star, thus integrating himself with the gods of the *duat*. Some spells specify that he would rise with Horus (Allen 2002; Hornung 1999:5–6). One spell, from the Pyramid of Unas, states that the pharaoh will travel through the firmament in the darkness, and he will rise on the horizon where he is radiant.⁴

According to a variant cosmological model, also stemming from the Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom, the king was identified with the imperishable circumpolar stars that never set, the ones “that know no destruction.”⁵ In short, there existed a tradition to the effect that the night sky *is* the beyond, and that the dead pharaoh became a star.

There are other features of Egyptian netherworld beliefs that are relevant to the understanding of Hades. An entire landscape in the sky was envisioned by the Egyptians, including islands, lakes, marshes and rivers. In the Pyramid texts, for example, lakes and fields of rushes are situated in the nocturnal heaven whereas similar landscapes are mentioned in the New Kingdom papyri.⁶ The fields of reeds are strongly

³ An excellent analysis of Egyptian cosmology can be found in Allen 1988.

⁴ Simpson et al. 2003:250 (spell 214, lines 154, 158).

⁵ Allen 2002:63; Simpson et al. 2003: utterances 214, 217 (pp. 248–49); 412 (p. 254; 422 (p. 255).

⁶ Simpson et al. 2003:256–57 (spell 473, lines 926, 930, 936); Hornung 1999:124–30.

reminiscent of the Homeric meadow of asphodels, which reinforces the hypothesis that the asphodels are the stars of the night sky.

In the New Kingdom, especially from the 18th dynasty onwards, theories about the cosmology and topography of the afterworld were summarized in the *Book of Day*, *Book of Night*, *Book of Gates*, *Amduat*, etc. They are attested in papyri, sarcophagi and royal tombs and consist of closely knit texts and images. The main theme is the journey of the sun god in the beyond hour by hour subdivided into twelve scenes, each reflecting one hour of the night (Hornung 1982:227–30; 1999:32–152). As the sun travels from the diurnal to the nocturnal universe, he reaches the depths of the beyond, becomes a corpse and eventually, as the night proceeds, he becomes regenerated and re-emerges stronger. Finally, he is reborn rejuvenated in the morning. For our purposes one question is important: where are the depths of the cosmos in which the sun hides at night? An intuitive answer is that they are below the earth, but this is not to be taken for granted. The Egyptians did conceive of the *duat* either below or in the nocturnal sky, as shown above. And because Egyptians had a way of turning conceptual models into images, they pictured the sky as the female goddess Hathor or Nut. They conceived of her in either an anthropomorphic form or as a cow, and they imagined the sun traveling *inside* her body. The point is that the sun was hidden from view at night even though he was in the sky (Hornung 1999:116–35, fig. 72; Allen 1988).

Sometimes Nut is split into a double figure, two naked women back to back. For example, the decorated ceilings of the royal tombs of Ramses IV and VI had a double image of Nut. In her capacity as the night sky, Nut swallowed the sun and gave birth to him at dawn in the form of a scarab (Hornung 1999:112–25). The dual sky, or dual Nut is stunningly echoed in the *Iliad* when heaven is described twice as the day and night sky: “under the sun and [under] the starry sky” (*Il.* 4.44).

According to this definition, what is essential about Hades is that the sun does not shine there (see figs. 1 and 4).

4. The Sinners Parade During the Hours of the Night

Another aspect of Egyptian afterworld belief may be helpful to the understanding of the passage on the sinners in the *Odyssey*. The hypo-

thetical visitor of an Egyptian royal tomb, such as the one of Seti I, Ramses IV or Ramses VI, would witness the journey to the afterworld as a succession of scenes. As we noted above, each scene depicted a particular hour of the night.

In the tomb of Seti I, for example, Osiris the judge appears in the scene depicting the eighth hour; the blessed and damned appear in the following hours; the blessed alone appear in the tenth hour (Hornung 1997:125). In the tomb of Haremhab, Osiris is depicted as receiving the blessed dead in the 5th hour (fig. 2).⁷

The succession of scenes with the judge coming first and the sinners and blessed appearing subsequently would fit very well the description in the *Odyssey*. Odysseus first sees Minos (who corresponds to Osiris), then the damned and finally Heracles. The latter may be considered a “blessed dead” since he was the model initiate of the Eleusinian cult.

Also very compatible with Egyptian beliefs is the description of Tantalos who is close to a lake from which he cannot drink. This strongly evokes Egyptian New Kingdom texts and vignettes from funerary papyri showing the deceased drinking greedily from a lake to refresh

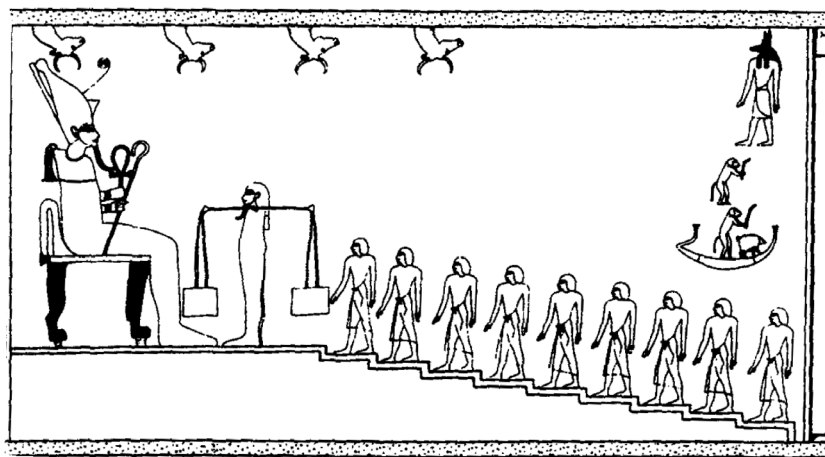


Figure 2. Nut from the Tomb of Ramses VI: Hornung 1999:113, fig. 63.

⁷ Book of Gates: Hornung 1999:62–63, figs. 29, 34.

his soul. Water revives the dead (Burkert 2004:87–87; Hornung 1999: 128–30).⁸ The Tantalos scene is evocative also of inscribed Greek Bacchic lamellae. On several specimens from Eleutherna Crete, the deceased demands water because he otherwise will perish: “I am parched with thirst and am dying; but grant me to drink.”⁹ Behind all these texts and images lies the idea that water is essential to preserve the dead and especially their memory.

Another lamella from Pharsalos, Thessaly, dated to c. 350–300, links the afterworld with stars. The deceased is instructed to say the whole entire truth: “I am a child of earth and starry sky. My name is Starry (asterios).”¹⁰ Similar expressions are found many times “I am the son of earth and starry sky.”¹¹ Last but not least, Plutarch clearly states that the constellations in the sky are souls (*psychai*) (*De Iside* 21).

Thus, there are quite a few arguments to the effect that stars and the starry sky afford a glimpse of the beyond, the sphere of the cosmos that contains both the transgressors and those who are blessed. Even one of the Pythagorean riddles might find its explanation with this theory. One of the *akousmata* poses the question “what are the isles of the blest?” The answer is: “Sun and moon.”¹² That the isles of the blessed are heavenly bodies in the sky is a counter-intuitive statement, but it makes sense if we adopt the hypothesis I have here suggested.

Finally, we must consider the testimony of Herodotus, who says that Orphic and Bacchic rituals are in reality Pythagorean and Egyptian (2.81.2). Although the exact relationship of these religious groups is disputed by scholars, it is clear that Herodotus thinks that they were related to each other and indebted to Egypt (Riedweg 2002:76–77; Huffman 2007:62–68).

I suggest here that Egyptian theology had found its way into Greek cosmology and metaphysics of the Archaic period. This is, historically

⁸) Note that in the tomb of Seti I, the visitor would see the lake of fire from which the blessed dead are provisioned but whose waters are flames for the damned: Hornung 1999:60.

⁹) Graf and Johnston 2007, nos. 10–14, 20–25; Merkelbach 1999; Tzifopoulos 2007.

¹⁰) Graf and Johnston 2007, no. 25, 34–35.

¹¹) Graf and Johnston 2007, nos. 8, 10–14, 16, 18, 25. On the Pelinna tablet (no. 26 a–b Graf and Johnston), the deceased is a bull or ram which falls into milk. This would make sense if the milk refers to the Milky Way, namely the celestial Nile.

¹²) Riedweg 2002:99–100; West 1971:215–216; Huffman 2008:42.

speaking, a highly plausible scenario. Since the seventh century, the Greeks had been serving as mercenaries in Egypt and had settled their own colony at Naukratis (Burkert 2004:71–98). And these very Egyptian beliefs continued into the Ptolemaic period as the astronomical ceiling of the temple of Hathor at Denderah testifies (Wilkinson 1991). The divine figures depicted in the ceiling of this temple are constellations: Horus and his mother Isis/Taweret maintain the order of the cosmos by anchoring evil forces such as the constellation *mskt*.

5. The Absence of the Sun in Hades

It has been suggested here that Hades corresponds to the nocturnal universe and that this fits reasonably well with Egyptian theology, according to which the sun was weak and finally became a corpse in the *duat*. There is a difference, however, between Egyptian and Homeric cosmology: in the epics, the sun is not only weak in the beyond, he *does not reach Hades at all* (*Od.* 12.377–88). If so, where does he go at night?

To answer this question we must investigate the location of Circe's island because it furnishes an invaluable clue as regards the sun's course.

Odysseus must reach this island *before* he crosses the Ocean to the netherworld, but, for reasons that are never explicitly stated in the text, he *must return* there before he can go on with his journey. This detail shows that the island of Circe is an interface between the inhabited world and Hades.

It is further clear from the text that the island is located at the edge of the inhabited world. Odysseus is disorientated when he is there because he cannot discern where the sun rises and where it sets. "My friends", he says, "we do not know where East is, nor where the bright sun goes down under the earth" (*Od.* 10.190–92; trans. Rieu). It follows from this passage that Odysseus cannot tell east and west apart. I take this to mean that he is very close to the end of the sun's heavenly orbit (fig. 1). Another point of relevance is that when the men sail away from the island, the sun sets and does not rise again until the return of the company from the beyond (12.8). Thus, when Odysseus goes to Hades he seems to have moved *beyond* the realm of the sun's orbit (fig. 1; Marinatos 2000).

In addition, there is good evidence that Circe is related to the sun. Her island is named the house of dawn and the rising sun (12.3–4),

or, the “ground of the dances of dawn.” Circe herself is a progeny of the sun (10.138; cf. also Hesiod, *Theogony*, 1011). All this information about Circe’s kinship to the great luminary, and the designation of her habitat as the ground of dawn, reveals that she has a connection with the solar path from sunrise to sunset. The island lies at the border of the inhabited world and the beyond. But now we have come back to the question: where does the sun go at night?¹³

A fragment of Mimnermus supplies us with the answer. The sun sleeps in a golden chamber by the banks of the Ocean (Mimnermus, Fr. 7 Edmonds). In Fragment 10 we are further told that the sun sleeps at night in a winged barque made by Hephaistus himself. He travels along the Ocean from the west, the land of Hesperides, to the east, the land of the Ethiopians. In short, the sun travels *along* the river from west to east and then climbs upwards. It is important to stress that in no case does he cross the Ocean, and that he travels on both the horizontal and vertical plane (fig. 3).

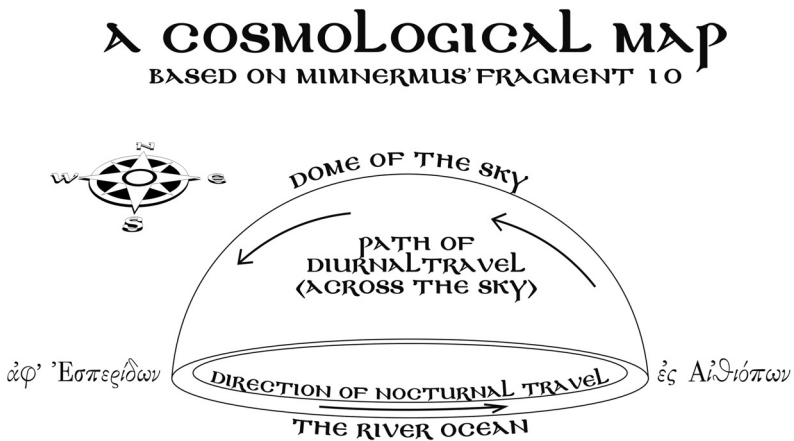


Figure 3. A cosmological map of Mimnermus explanation of the sun’s course. (Drawing Catherine Chaton)

¹³ In the *Odyssey* we are told that the sun leaves the waters and climbs up in the sky (3.1–3), or that it rises from the deep ocean (19.434).

Mimnermus confirms that the sun does not cross the river Ocean, and that the latter separates the inhabited world from Hades. Finally he confirms indirectly that the beyond is a sunless universe and hence a *nocturnal* universe.

It is important, however, that we do not mistake the nocturnal world of the beyond for Tartaros (*Il.* 13.481), which is a specific region *below* Hades. Tartaros lies in the lower depths of the cosmos, and is a prison for unruly gods whom Zeus punishes with thunder, according to the Pythagoreans at least. Odysseus never visits Tartaros.

6. The Vertical and Horizontal Cosmos

I have argued here that Hades is the nocturnal universe beyond the river Ocean. Once Odysseus is in Hades, he is able to gaze at the nocturnal sky with new eyes and recognize Minos seated in judgement of the sinners.

However, it may be objected, there are clear elements in the Homeric epics which suggest that the cosmos had a vertical division of up and down. Tartaros is as deep below Hades as the sky is high above the earth (*Il.* 8.13–16 cf. also 8.478–81; 14.279). In the *Iliad*, when Talthybios makes a sacrifice on behalf of the Achaeans, he invokes Zeus first, then the sun and earth, and then the Erinyes, who are said to be under the earth and punish those who do not honour oaths (*Il.* 19.258–60). The choice of these particular gods shows that there is a clear division of deities into those which are up and those which are down. Hades is clearly equated with below in certain passages in the *Iliad* (20.61, 214; 22.482). What do we make of this?

A most important clue concerns the abode of Thetis as described in the *Iliad*. We get detailed descriptions of both her upward journey from a cave at the bottom of the sea to the heights of heaven, and the other way around, from the depths of the sea to the heights of Olympus (1.496–97; 24.95–99). This is clearly a vertical journey. However, we also get the information from Hephaistos's mouth that her habitat is situated *next* to the river Ocean, by its ineffable streams (18.402–5). The Ocean is not located in the underworld, as we have seen, but at the edges of the universe. How can Thetis live both *under* and *beyond*? There seems to be a contradiction between the two epics which can be ascribed to multiple authorship, carelessness, or even ignorance.

I propose a model which maintains the coherence of the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* (fig. 4).¹⁴ The Ocean is at the edge of both the vertical and horizontal dimension of the world because it surrounds it like the outer layer of an onion. The cosmos is thus a sphere surrounded by a sunless region beyond the sun's orbit, above and below, left as well as right. The inhabited cosmos is girt by the river Ocean; beyond it is the region in which the sun does not exist.

This model does not solve all the problems of Archaic cosmology, but it does raise some important issues concerning the indebtedness of Greek Hades to the *duat*.¹⁵ We must, in any case, remember that the Greeks themselves claimed the primacy of Egyptian wisdom in religious matters. For this reason many wise men like Pythagoras, Thales and Solon were thought to have been to Egypt.

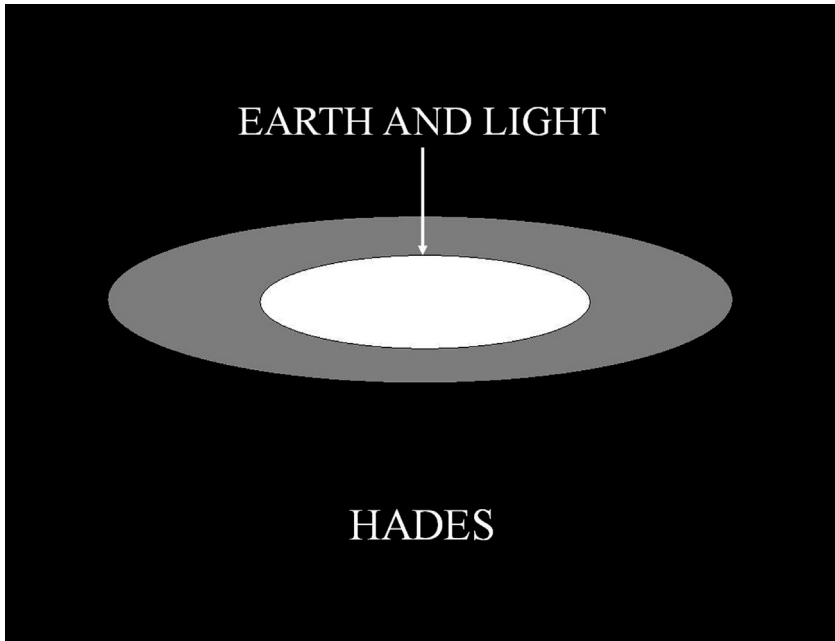


Figure 4. The inhabited cosmos and Hades of the Homeric world (Nanno Marinatos)

¹⁴) For how contemporary physics deals with the same conceptual riddles see Osserman 2003:350–55, who discusses the extraordinary coincidence between Rieman's and Dante's concepts of the universe.

¹⁵) For the analysis of the location of the *duat* in the cosmos see Allen 1988:5–7.

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The Afterlife of Emperor Claudius in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*

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Abstract

Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, the earliest extant example of ancient Menippean satire, tells of Emperor Claudius' death and ascent to heaven, where his request for deification is rejected by the council of the gods, and his subsequent descent to the underworld, where he is condemned of mass murder of Roman noblemen. Claudius is not an observer of things in heaven and the underworld or a character involved in a quest for knowledge and truth, but a dead character who undergoes judgment. He is also a dead character who behaves as if he were still alive. Seneca suggests that Claudius' afterlife is a mere continuation of his earthly life and vice-versa that he had always been living in an isolated and "fantastic" world. The *Apocolocyntosis* parodies epic descents and historiographical topoi as well as the mythological otherworld of punishment and reward, ideas of afterlife, and imperial deification.

Keywords

Menippean satire, katabasis, Odysseus, Aeneas, Elpenor, Palinurus

Introduction

On October 13, 54 AD, the Roman emperor Claudius died, most probably poisoned by his wife Agrippina. His death was kept silent until she had made arrangements for her son Nero to succeed to Claudius. He was buried with regal pomp and accorded divine honors.¹ The *laudatio* was delivered by Nero but was composed by Seneca the Younger.

¹ See Sen. *Apocol.* 1.1; Suet. *Cl.* 45; Cassius Dio 60.34.3; Tac. *Ann.* 12.69.1. For recent discussions of the *Apocolocyntosis* with regard to the ritual of imperial apotheosis, see Price 1987; Fishwick 2002; Gradel 2002:325–30.

According to Tacitus, it displayed much elegance because Seneca was a person who knew how to please his audience. The praise of Claudius' ancestors and some of his accomplishments was favorably received, but when the speaker proceeded with the dead emperor's foresight and wisdom (*providentiam sapientiamque*) no one could refrain from laughter (Tac. *Ann.* 13.3).

It was the same Seneca who, shortly after Claudius' death, wrote the *Apocolocyntosis*, a Menippean satire on his deification. It is the most mordant (direct) political satire on a Roman Emperor that has come down to us from the Early Empire. Senecan authorship has been disputed on various grounds, but the manuscript tradition attributes the work to him and the authenticity is nowadays accepted by the overwhelming majority of scholars. One problem that has not yet found a satisfactory answer concerns the title. Cassius Dio (60.35.3) reports that Seneca "wrote a work entitled *Pumpkinification* as though it were some kind of deification" (σύγγραμμα, ἀποκολοκύντωσιν αὐτὸ ὥσπερ τινὰ ἀθανάτισιν ὀνομάσας), but the manuscripts give other titles for the work we have: *Divi Claudii*... ΑΠΟΘΗΟCIC... *per saturam* and *Ludus de morte Claudii* (i) (*Caesaris*). It is generally assumed that the two works are the same, but the title given by Dio does not directly relate to anything that appears in the text of the satire.²

The *Apocolocyntosis* opens with the death of Claudius and proceeds with his ascent to heaven,³ his request for admittance to the divine council, the debate among the gods and the rejection of the deification on Augustus' proposal, followed by immediate expulsion from heaven. It next tells how Mercury drags Claudius from heaven to earth, where he witnesses his own funeral procession and enjoys his own dirge (a mock verse *laudatio* praising his mental and physical qualities and extolling his achievements). Finally it narrates Claudius' "descent" to the underworld, where he is judged by Aeacus, is found guilty and condemned. The chief indictment is mass murder of Roman noblemen.

² Unless something relevant was contained in the lacuna between chapters 7 and 8. Eden 1984:1–13, provides a basic and lucid survey of the above-mentioned issues; cf. also Lund 1994:11–13.

³ I use the term "ascent" throughout, a term which inserts Claudius' case in the pattern of visits to heaven by living people, though this is, strictly speaking, a parody of the "ascension" to heaven of a dead emperor.

Claudius is initially condemned to play dice with a dice-box that has holes in its bottom; but he is eventually delivered to Aeacus' freedman Menander to be his clerical slave. At each turn Seneca mocks the late emperor's physical and moral failings: head-shaking, deformity, limping gait, stuttering and inarticulateness, gluttony, amnesia, heedlessness, and cruelty; and his various habits and obsessions, especially with the administration of justice and dice-playing.⁴

Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* is the only specimen of Menippean satire that has survived from classical Rome and, as a matter of fact, it is the earliest extant example of any Menippean satire.⁵ What a Menippean satire actually is remains a vexed issue.⁶ I am not here concerned with the concepts of Menippean satire formulated by Northrop Frye (1957) or by Mikhail Bakhtin (1984), who included texts like the Socratic dialogue, the diatribe, the symposium, the novel, etc. Both Frye and Bakhtin were more properly interested in modern Menippean satire. I am specifically concerned with the tradition that presumably begins with Menippus of Gadara and includes Varro's *Saturae Menippeae*, Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, Lucian's *Icaromenippus* and *Nekyomantia* (and probably a couple of other works), and Julian's *Caesares*. These and a few others are discussed by Joel Relihan in his systematic monograph on *Ancient Menippean Satire*, the best book ever written on the topic. The above-mentioned works do not form a homogeneous group. What brings them together into a "genre" (a term to be used with caution) are certain characteristics which Relihan provides in lieu of a definition:⁷ the mixture of prose and verse, fantastic narrative, burlesque of language and literature, jokes at the expense of learning, and relation to three main subtexts: Homer's *Odyssey*, Old Comedy, and Platonic Myth, especially the myth of Er.

⁴ For the historicity of these features see briefly Ramelli 2001 and Eden's commentary on individual passages.

⁵ For a chapter to chapter reading of the *Apocolocyntosis* as a Menippean satire see Weinreich 1923.

⁶ See Riikonen 1987; Relihan 1993; Branham 2005:3–31, on Bakhtin; and briefly Rimell 2005:164–68. Bakhtin (1984:113) describes the Menippea as "extraordinarily flexible and as changeable as Proteus."

⁷ Though the title of the relative chapter promises one ("A Definition of Ancient Menippean Satire," 12–36).

Almost all of these elements are relevant to Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, but this satire is also unique in certain respects. A characteristic feature of Claudius' afterlife adventure is what Bakhtin calls a "three-planed construction" of the Menippea: Olympus, earth, the underworld (Bakhtin 1984:116). However, the *Apocolocyntosis* is the *only* example of this kind among extant ancient Menippean satires. In *Icaromenippus* and *Nekyomantia* Lucian treated the voyages to heaven and earth independently of each other.

For combined visions of heaven and the underworld, Relihan compares texts like Plato's myth of Er, Alexander's quest in the *Alexander Romance*, Lucian's *Verae Historiae*, and the *Apocalypse of Paul* (to which one could add the *Apocalypse of Peter*). I should like to point out that, though the *Apocolocyntosis* presents thematic affinities with several texts,⁸ it differs significantly from them and also from other Menippean satires. A fundamental difference is that Claudius is neither a mere *observer* of things in heaven and the underworld nor some character involved in a quest for knowledge and truth. He is a *dead character* who undergoes "judgment," first in heaven as regards his request for deification and next in the underworld for his crimes, a place from where he never returns. Also, during Claudius' brief passage from earth on the way to the underworld his (dis)abilities, habits and achievements are given a mock "judgment" by the crowd and the mourners.

In the *Apocolocyntosis* the council of the gods functions like a Roman Senate and rejects Claudius' deification decreed by its earthly counterpart immediately after his death.⁹ The underworld is populated by Claudius' victims, who welcome him like a reborn Osiris. The judicial procedure is thoroughly romanized, with the mythical judge Aeacus playing the role of the presiding judge, the *praetor* (Eden 1984:144). The romanization of heaven and the underworld had a long history behind it. Sending the good Romans to heaven and the Elysian Fields and the bad ones to Tartarus is familiar from major literary texts, such as Cicero's *De republica* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. The humorous treatment of an apotheosis was also not unprecedented: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* offers more than one example, and actually in his proposal in favor of

⁸ In addition to Relihan 1993:75–90, see Eden 1984:13–17.

⁹ On the time of the Senate's vote of deification see Fishwick 2002; Gradel 2002: 299–304.

Claudius' deification the god Diespiter moves that "the emperor's name be added to Ovid's list of metamorphoses" (9.5: *eamque rem ad Metamorphosis Ovidi adiciendam*).

Sulla's law on assassination and poisoning, according to which Claudius is tried in the underworld (14.1), prescribed banishment and forfeit of property for those found guilty (Eden 1984:144). The kind of punishment Claudius receives hardly matches the mass murders of which he is accused (25 senators, 221 knights and innumerable others). It is envisaged as a humorous version of the punishments inflicted on the mythical sinners Sisyphus, Tantalus, and Ixion. In essence it is satire itself that inflicts the merited punishment on Claudius.

In the Graeco-Roman world comical and satirical versions of afterlife had existed for a long time before Seneca wrote his *Apocolocyntosis*. But each work should be examined individually and placed within its "generic" tradition. Interpretations of the character and intent of Seneca's satire vary considerably and are often diametrically opposed. The present treatment adopts Relihan's view that Roman heaven and hell as portrayed in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* are "meaningless,"¹⁰ and consequently that the work, being a Menippean satire, possesses "no stable moral or didactic purpose." Furthermore Relihan's observations that in a Menippean satire "there is an unreliable narrator or source" and that the genre "works against the reader's ability to understand its purpose" (Relihan 1993:17, 35) are also applicable to Seneca's satire: in the proem the narrator simply *warns* the reader that all he will say is *entirely unreliable*. It is therefore surprising that the overwhelming majority of scholars should have detected some sort or other of serious intent in the *Apocolocyntosis*.

¹⁰ Relihan 1993:90; cf. 88–89: "The afterworld in the *Apocolocyntosis* seems to treat heroes and villains fairly equally: we hear of Tiberius, Drusilla, Livia, and Augustus in heaven, while Caligula, denied heavenly honors, is a friend of the judge below." The extremely opposite view is taken by Weinbrot (2005:49): "The *Apocolocyntosis* clearly is a satire that affirms justice, however delayed, in heaven, Rome and hell. The gods are redeemed and guided by Augustus, the relatively recent arrival who refutes the dim-witted Hercules and sleazy Diespiter. Rome itself is redeemed by Augustus's enduring wisdom and by its own freedom from the brutal Claudius. Justice is especially seen to be done in hell, where Aeacus refuses to hear what he knows is self-justifying nonsense and makes the punishment fit the crime."

The primary target of the *Apocolocyntosis* is of course Claudius.¹¹ But in the course of the satire the author spares no one, perhaps even himself (cf. Relihan 1993:89). He also parodies the mythological otherworld of punishment and reward, ideas of afterlife, and imperial deification.¹² As regards the “political message” which is presumably addressed to Nero,¹³ there are several reasons for not taking seriously the verse panegyric in which Nero is assimilated to the immortal Apollo (see for instance Robinson 2005:251–54), and to be skeptical of the notion that Seneca’s satirical work would ultimately serve the same purpose as the serious admonition of the *De Clementia*, by making the young emperor laugh at the old values and consequently open his eyes to new ones (Nauta 1987:95). What complicates things is that, as noted earlier, Seneca composed an entirely laudatory funeral oration for Claudius, which was read out by Nero and provoked the laughter of his audience (Rudich 1993:7; cf. Hooley 2007:147), and that the same Seneca had in the past heaped lavish praise on Claudius in the *Consolation to Polybius* (Rudich 1997:38). As for the importance commonly attached to the speech of Augustus, it is difficult to take seriously someone who talks of the mass murder accusation in the following terms: “Murder of kin and killing without hearing the other side are things that do not happen anywhere else, and certainly not in heaven. Look at

¹¹ Relihan notes, however (1993:77): “The *Apocolocyntosis* is not an attack on Claudius pure and simple, but an account of an occasionally sympathetic wanderer who is caught in a comic afterworld whose right to judge and condemn him is at least as his own right to become a god.”

¹² Gradel’s objection that Seneca’s piece “is not about the relative deification of Claudius [the actual rites and rulings of the Roman state] . . . but about the absolute divinity denied to Claudius at heaven’s door” (2002:327; cf. 321–24), merits consideration but has its weaknesses. No-one would have read the debate in the heavenly assembly without thinking of senatorial debates about apotheosis (so correctly Price 1987:87–91). Also, whether the witness was part of the deification procedure or not (as Gradel believes, 2002:295–98), Seneca’s satire of the witness to Drusilla’s (and indirectly to Claudius’) ascension would have reminded people of the “scandal” associated with Numerius Atticus’ testimony, the senator who swore to have seen Augustus ascending to heaven: Livia rewarded him with the sum of one million sesterces (Dio 56.46.2).

¹³ This notion has always enjoyed great favor. See for instance Eden 1984:12; Griffin 1992:130: “No doubt the long *laudatio Neronis*, announcing the spirit of the new reign, was meant to flatter him and encourage him in the right path”; Schubert 1998, chapter I.1; Cole 2006.

Jupiter: in his so many years of reign all he did was break Vulcan's leg when he hurled him from the sky to earth and hang his wife in the sky when he became angry at her: did he do any killing?" (10.4–11.1). Arguments like this set the standard for evaluating the overall significance of Augustus' speech, where in my view there are no serious but only serious-looking pronouncements.

Relihan (1993:34) describes Menippean satire as "an antigenre, a burlesque of literature at large."¹⁴ This article treats selected cases of literary parody in the *Apocolocyntosis*, mainly of epic but also of historiography. It also treats the relationship between Claudius' life and afterlife, which turn out to be one and the same. In terms of substance what happens in the underworld continues a process of judgment which began in heaven; or, in other words, heaven and the underworld are envisaged as two sides of the same coin. As a matter of fact, the narrator identifies heaven with hell in a satirical misapplication of Catullus 3.12 *unde negant redire quemquam* ("from where they say no-one returns") to heaven (11.6).¹⁵ Also, though Claudius' deification is rejected in heaven, in the underworld he is welcomed as a reborn god. Hence in this study the two stages of Claudius' afterlife are treated in conjunction with each other. As a point of departure I use the scene of Claudius' arrival in heaven.

Claudius' Arrival in Heaven

In chapter 5 it is announced to Jupiter that a weird character has arrived in heaven: he is shaking his head all the time and is dragging his right leg; when asked about his nationality, he replies in a confused, unintelligible language that is neither Greek nor Latin, nor of any known race. Jupiter orders Hercules, who was widely traveled and was thus expected to know all nations of the world, to go and find out who this character is. Hercules is shocked at the shape of this unusual fellow, his limping gait and his hoarse, inarticulate voice, reminiscent of a sea animal

¹⁴) On literary parody as a main feature of Menippean satire see also Courtney 1962.

¹⁵) Scholars have been uncomfortable with this idea but the MSS unanimously read ... *trahit ad inferos a caelo unde negant redire quemquam*. See Eden 1984, and Ronconi's apparatus (all references are made to this edition of the *Apocolocyntosis*).

(cf. Lund 1996). He begins to think that his thirteenth labor has arrived when on closer look he realizes that the beast may be some kind of human being.

Being a “Greekling” (*Graeculus*), Hercules addresses him with a Homeric verse: “Who are you and from where? What kind are your city and parents?” In *Odyssey* 1.170 this line¹⁶ is addressed by Telemachus to a female goddess (Athenē) disguised as a male (Mentes); here it is appropriately adapted to render the ambiguity of race and species surrounding this character. Hercules’ question provokes the following reaction from the newly arrived, who is none other than the deceased emperor Claudius: Claudius rejoiced that there were *philologi* up there; he began to hope that there would be some place for his historical works. So he, too, used a verse of Homer (*Odyssey* 9.39) to indicate that he was a Caesar and said: “The wind, bearing me from Ilion, brought me to the Cicones.” In Homer the line is spoken by Odysseus to the Phaeacian King Alcinoos and begins the account of his *nostos*. Claudius uses Ἰλίοθεν (“from Ilion”), Odysseus’ place of departure, to allude to the fact that he is a Julian emperor, descended from Trojan Aeneas, the son of Venus and father of Iulus.¹⁷ The narrator steps in to supplement the next line in the Homeric passage, which in his view tells a greater truth: “There I sacked the city and destroyed the people.” The reader is expected to supply “Rome” as the city destroyed by Claudius (Eden 1984 *ad loc.*), in place of Thracian Ismarus cleverly omitted by the speaker in quoting the Homeric passage. The goddess Fever, who has accompanied Claudius to heaven, fails to understand his learned allusion and steps in to explain that Claudius is lying about his country of origin, because he was actually born at Lyons. Claudius is angered and protests in a language that is unintelligible; only his outstretched hand suggests to those who know that he is ordering that the goddess be taken out and beheaded. But nobody pays any attention to him, as if he were talking to his freedmen (chapter 6).

¹⁶ The Homeric line reads “where then is your city” (πόθι τοι, instead of ποίη).

¹⁷ Eden 1984 *ad loc.*; for the exchange of Homeric verses cf. O’Gorman 2005.

Afterlife as a Continuation of Earthly Life

Claudius' arrival in heaven and most prominently his reaction to the intervention of the goddess Fever portray a dead emperor who believes he is still alive. This is a unique feature among extant Menippean satires and a vital one for understanding that Claudius' afterlife is envisaged as a mere continuation of his earthly life. Seen from the opposite perspective the portrait of Claudius in heaven is the truest reflection of his life: Seneca suggests that he has always been living in his own isolated and "fantastic" world. This is corroborated by Hercules' shocked reaction at the monstrous sight of Claudius: dead or alive, the emperor is a permanent inhabitant of a "mythical" world, where men and beasts look alike.¹⁸

In the course of the narrative Claudius "realizes" that he is dead only when he sees his own funeral procession on the *via Sacra* (12.3: *ut vidit funus suum, intellexit se mortuum esse*), at the time Mercury is dragging him from heaven towards the underworld. In essence this is a sarcastic comment on Claudius' stupidity, because the "realization" of being dead has no effect on him whatsoever. He continues *to act as if he were alive*: he is captivated by the (mock) praises sung in his honor and would have liked to stay longer to enjoy the spectacle, but Mercury drags him on. As a matter of fact Claudius will continue to act as if he were alive to the very end of the satire. Seneca has depicted a character who has no consciousness of reality, whatever that is; he is totally cut out from the world around him both in life and after death. When at the end of the *Apocolocyntosis* he is condemned to play dice using a dice-box with holes in it and eventually to become the freedman Menander's clerk for petitions, *no complaint or protest comes out of his lips*.¹⁹ His Sisyphean dice-playing and his becoming a freedman's clerical slave are not punishments but a mere continuation of his earthly life and activities in different terms and circumstances. Suetonius reports the following as regards his obsession with dice-playing: "He was very fond of gaming and published a book on the art. He even used to play as he

¹⁸) Braund and James 1998 discuss the moral and political significance of Claudius' monstrosity and suggest an analogy between the description of the man and the character of his reign.

¹⁹) On his reaction to the verdict of guilt see the next section.

rode in his chariot, having the board so fitted to it as to prevent his game from being disturbed” (Suet. *Cl.* 33.2.6–8). To his obsession with the administration of justice I will come back below. As regards his punishment to become a freedman’s slave, Suetonius describes him as the pawn of his wives and freedmen: “But these and other acts, and in fact almost the whole administration of his reign, he conducted not so much by his own judgment as by the judgment of his wives and freedmen, since for the most part he used to act according to their interests and fancies” (ibid. 25.5.8–12).

Witnesses and Literary Testimonies

Claudius’ dialogue with Hercules and the reaction of the goddess Fever contain another important feature of the present Menippean satire. It is the role assigned to witnesses and testimonies. This element ultimately reflects Claudius’ obsession with the administration of justice and the close relationship between his life and afterlife. One aspect of it concerns the employment of a literary allusion, epic or other, as testimony to the truth of a statement. When used to back up the truth of fictional events, such as Claudius’ ascent to heaven, it adapts familiar historiographical and pseudohistoriographical topoi.²⁰ The interplay between fiction, historiography and judicial procedure determines the “truthfulness” of this satirical account and is pursued in various ways throughout the narrative.

It was seen above that in chapter 5 Claudius uses a Homeric line as a literary testimony to his claimed descent from Troy (and hence from Trojan Aeneas), while the narrator adduces the next Homeric line as evidence for Claudius’ metaphorical sacking of Rome and the killing of its people. The goddess Fever takes Claudius’ learned allusion as a statement of fact and proceeds to give formal testimony as regards his true place of origin; Claudius is angered and sentences her to death. In this quick, mock trial procedure the accuser is a *homo philologus* and by implication the defendant is a person ignorant of Homer (Eden 1984 *ad loc.*).

²⁰ See the comments of Eden 1984 on the poem of the *Apocolocyntosis*.

In the proem the narrator adduces as potential witness for his fictional account of Claudius' ascent to heaven the superintendent of the Appian way, who had in the past sworn before the Senate to have seen Julia Drusilla, Caligula's sister, rise to heaven; since nobody believed him, he solemnly swore never again to bear witness to what he has seen, even if it were a murder in public place; so he only spoke in private to the narrator (1.2–3). The proem exploits the use of witnesses to imperial ascension (cf. above) in order to parody the historians' conventional assurance of truthfulness. In addition it subtly alludes to Claudius' obsession with the administration of law, which is openly satirized elsewhere in the *Apocolocyntosis*.²¹ In particular, the arbitrary nature of the informant's testimony and phrases like "nobody ever demanded from a historian to produce sworn witnesses (*iuratores*)" or "I will say whatever trips off my tongue," remind the reader of the fact that Claudius' trials were a mockery of justice and invest the conception and writing of this fictional account of Claudius' afterlife with the arbitrariness of his verdicts. I quote the relevant passage from Suetonius' *Life of Claudius*:

Whether he was consul or out of office, he administered justice most conscientiously, even on solemn occasions for himself and his family, and sometimes even on festivals of ancient institution and days of ill-omen. He did not always adhere to the letter of the laws, but in many cases modified their rigor or lenity according to his sentiments of equity and justice; for he granted a second trial to persons who had lost their cases before private judges by demanding more than the law prescribed, while those who were convicted of more serious crimes he condemned to the wild beasts, exceeding the punishment prescribed by law. In hearing and deciding cases he exhibited a strange inconsistency of temper, for he was now cautious and shrewd, sometimes inconsiderate and rash, and other times frivolous and like one out of his mind. (Suet. *Cl.* 14.1–15.1)

In chapter 12, as Mercury is dragging Claudius to the underworld, the dead emperor witnesses his own funeral procession on the *via Sacra*. This is another version of the employment of witnesses in the satire, a possible reversal of witnesses testifying to imperial ascension and a highly ironic one: Claudius is made to function as *an eye-witness to his*

²¹) Eden (1984:11) notes in this regard: "By arrogating to himself the judicial function which properly belonged elsewhere, Claudius had made a mockery of justice through impatience and caprice and a profit for collusive and corrupt barristers."

own funeral in order to “realize” that he is dead; but even so he continues to live his “fictional” earthly life and becomes enchanted with the (mock) praises sung in his honour.

Next (13.1) Mercury leads Claudius across the Campus Martius “wrapping his head all around” (*capite obvoluto*), so that no one may recognize him (*ne quis eum possit agnoscere*). The actual route for the *katabasis* is placed between “the river Tiber and the *via Tecta*,” the latter name meaning “Covered Way.”²² In other words Claudius’ passage from earth and his “descent” to the underworld are by implication portrayed as having *no witnesses*, while his ascent to heaven *may* have had an *arbitrary* eye-witness.

Finally in Aeacus’ underworld court Claudius is accused and sentenced without defense (chapter 14). The judge of Hades, ironically called a *homo iustissimus* (14.2), flatly refuses to hear the testimony of his defense attorney and, as testimony for his verdict, he quotes (14.3) a Hesiodic line (fr. 286.2 M-W): “Let him suffer what he did, so that justice may be done.” Everyone is stupefied at this novel and unprecedented way of administering justice, with the exception of Claudius, “to whom it seemed more unjust than unparalleled” (*Claudio magis iniquum videbatur quam novum*). Suetonius (*Cl.* 42.1.12) and Dio (60.16.7) report that, when punishing his enemies, Claudius used to quote to his soldiers a Homeric line (*Il.* 24.369) as a watchword. And in terms of the character of his verdicts, which I presented above, the satire puts the emperor on trial in the same arbitrary way in which he himself used to administer justice while alive — and also after death, as when he sentenced the goddess Fever to death (6.2). As regards the reaction of the audience, Seneca pokes more fun at Claudius’ amazed victims than at Claudius. I do not think that the emperor “realizes his own guilt in such matters,” as Relihan believes (1993:86). He is plainly insensitive as regards his victims and sensitive only as regards himself (so correctly Eden 1984 *ad loc.*).

Claudius is condemned to play dice using a dice-box with holes in it (14.4). But then Caligula produces eye-witnesses (*producere testes*) who had seen him flogging and beating his uncle Claudius as was done to slaves (15.2). So Claudius is judged his legal property. Caligula offers

²²) For the identification see Eden 1984 *ad loc.*

him as a present to Aeacus who in his turn delivers Claudius to his freedman Menander to be his clerk for petitions. The worst imaginable “punishment” for Claudius is to be perennially involved with the administration of justice as he used to do in life, but now without having the authority to administer it himself. The conclusion of Claudius’ afterlife adventure parodies mythological accounts of afterlife punishment and simultaneously mocks at the futility of Claudius’ life and achievements as an emperor.

Claudius as Odysseus and Aeneas

In introducing himself to Hercules Claudius poses as Odysseus. The line he quotes (5.4) begins the account of *nostos* which the Achaean hero gives to king Alcinous (*Odyssey* 9.39) and tells that the wind brought him from Troy to the land of the Cicones. On a second reading Claudius’ Odyssean voyage “from Ilion” (Ἰλιόθεν) alludes to the Julian claim of descent from Aphrodite’s (grand)son, and therefore Claudius poses also as another Aeneas, father of Iulus-Ascanius (Eden 1984 *ad loc.*). A Virgilian allusion elsewhere in the text establishes a relationship between Claudius and Iulus in a very sarcastic vein. In the proem of the *Apocolocyntosis* the limping Claudius is said to have made the journey to heaven *non passibus aequis* (1.2: “with unequal steps”). The Virgilian quote parodies the gait of the boy Iulus in *Aeneid* 2, as he is trying to keep up with his father’s longer strides at the moment of departure from burning Troy. Commenting on the Virgilian quote Leach writes: “As Ascanius was to Aeneas, so Claudius to Augustus and Tiberius, yet who would consider him a replica of Rome’s founding son?” (Leach 1989:206).

Relihan lists the *Odyssey* as one of three major subtexts of Menippean satire. In relation to it Homer’s epic stands as “an account of a man who travels at great length through a fantastic world, often learning of supernatural truths (in the underworld), and tempted by immortality (on the island of Calypso)” (Relihan 1993:31). As noted above, Claudius had been living in a “fantastic” world all his life and simply continues to do so after death. He does not travel to the underworld but is dragged down there for punishment, and he is definitely not interested in supernatural truths; but he is eager to become one of the immortals and so he ascends to heaven. Furthermore Seneca’s account reverses the

Odyssean order of things by taking Claudius, deified by the Senate, first to heaven, where his admittance to the council of the gods is rejected, and then to the underworld where, unlike Odysseus, he remains forever.

The intertextual association of Claudius with Odysseus has several other aspects to it. Below I discuss only a few. Claudius' Odyssean journey thematizes the dead emperor's obsession with Homer. In heaven he displays his Homeric Greek by quoting *Odyssey* 9.39. He is, however, satirized for omitting the next Homeric line and implicitly for using *Greek* to declare his identity as a *Roman* emperor (*Homerico versus Caesarem se esse significans*).²³ The truth is that Claudius manipulates *Odyssey* 9.39 like another Odysseus, with philological "shrewdness": his aim is to promote his Julian descent and hence he quotes Ἰλιόθεν, Odysseus' place of departure, but skips Ἰσμύρῳ, Odysseus' destination. His reason for condemning the goddess Fever to death is not only ignorance of Homer but also her audacity to challenge his divine-imperial descent.

Thus Claudius begins his own mythical journey in a manner worthy of "crafty" Odysseus. The dead emperor is a reader of Homer and Virgil and plays out literary scenarios. His major literary scenario uses Homer and Virgil to air his descent from *divus Iulius* and *divus Augustus*, and hence to advance his claim to *be admitted to the council of the immortals*. The claim is ridiculed by an unknown god at the council of the gods (the beginning of chapter 8 is missing and hence we do not know how it was presented before the divine Senate). It is later supported by the god Diespiter (9.4–6) but the deified Augustus demolishes it in his intervention (10.4): "This man you see has been all along masquerading under my name" (*per tot annos sub meo nomine latens*).²⁴

The text provides no information as to *how* Claudius reaches heaven.²⁵ Commenting on the language of his death agony (3.1: *Claudius*

²³) Claudius wrote an Etruscan and a Carthaginian history in Greek. His love of Greek was notorious: in the words of Suetonius, "he took every occasion to declare his love for that language and its superiority" (*amorem praestantiamque linguae omni occasione professus*). He liked to quote Homer in court and to speak Greek publicly and in official capacities, something for which he was ridiculed (Suet. *Cl.* 42; Dio 60.16.8).

²⁴) Kraft 1966 argues that what motivated the attack on Claudius was the fact that he was a Claudius, who had persecuted and murdered Augustus' Julian descendants, the rightful heirs to empire; cf. however Eden's comment on this view (Eden 1984:10).

²⁵) This has been considered an omission and has prompted scholars to conjecture a lacuna between 5.1 and 5.2. See Koster 1979.

animam agree coepit nec invenire exitum poterat) Athanassakis argued that *animam agere* is a double-entendre: it may also suggest “to break wind” and should be related to Claudius’ last words, *vae me, puto, concavi me* (4.3) (Athanassakis 1973). He further associated the “wind” of Claudius’ *anima* with the “wind” (ἄνεμος) that brought Odysseus to the land of the Cicones and concluded that the dead emperor “was catapulted to heaven by means of a mighty fart.”²⁶

The Homeric line which Claudius quotes to Hercules when asked of his place of origin (“The wind, bearing me from Ilion, brought me to the Cicones”) may also conceal an *intratextual* allusion to the manner of his arrival in heaven. Odysseus had immediately before (9.19–20) revealed his identity to the Phaeacians as follows: “I am Odysseus, son of Laertes; I am known among men for my crafty designs and *for my glory that has reached as far up as heaven*.” In the context of a conversation that takes place *in heaven* and in which Claudius replies about *the wind* and *sailing* while he is asked about his place of origin, the reader could construe Claudius’ reply in the light of Odysseus’ proud claim, καὶ μὲν κλέος οὐρανὸν ἵκει, and visualize the dead emperor being “wafted” by the wind to the sky. Sailing was a common metaphor for flying in Greek and Roman literature. And in Lucian’s *Verae historiae*, a fantastic adventure that provides a comic vision of heaven and the underworld, the wind (ἄνεμος) *literally* lifts up the narrator’s ship with its crew and takes them on a voyage to the moon (1.9).

Claudius’ “Descent” into the Underworld: A Parody of Epic *katabasis*

Claudius poses as both Odysseus and Aeneas also upon his arrival in the underworld: the dead, who are Claudius’ victims, give him a ceremonial welcome and Claudius exclaims: “Friends everywhere! How did *you* come to be here” (13.6). Suetonius records that he was an amnesiac and used to wonder why the people executed on his orders did not show up a bit later (*Cl.* 39.1). But *quomodo huc venistis vos* is also a parody of Odysseus’ address to the shade of Elpenor, the first shade to approach him in the Homeric first *Nekyia*: Ἐλπήνορ, πῶς ἦλθες ὑπὸ

²⁶) Athanassakis 1974; on *anima* and ἄνεμος cf. Heil 2006:197–98; Paschalis 1997: 37, 174.

ζόφον ἡρόεντα; (11.57). Aeneas' similar question to the shade of his pilot Palinurus during the hero's *katabasis* (*Aen.* 6.341–42) adapts the Homeric line: *quis te, Palinure, deorum / eripuit nobis medioque sub aequore mersit?* As will be seen in greater detail below, Claudius' *katabasis* alludes to the Vergilian passage as well.

After the death of Claudius and Nero's accession, Agrippina forced Narcissus, Claudius' secretary, an immensely rich and most powerful freedman, to commit suicide (*Tac. Ann.* 13.1.4). Before murdering her husband, Agrippina had sent Narcissus off to Campania, feigning that he needed thermal baths as a cure for his gout, but in truth, as Cassius Dio believes (60.34.4), because he guarded his master so carefully that she would never have accomplished her plan.

In the *Apocolocyntosis* Narcissus reaches the underworld *before* Nero in order to welcome his master. Seneca humorously tells that he “took a short cut” to Hades (13.2).²⁷ Looking smooth and shining since he had just left the bath (*nitidus, ut erat a balineo*), Narcissus runs to meet and welcome Mercury and Claudius: “What brings the gods among the mortals?”²⁸ Mercury commands him to announce their arrival to the inhabitants of the underworld without delay and Narcissus executes the command with admirable speed. Though suffering from gout, Narcissus comes in an instant to the Gate of Dis: playing on a famous Virgilian line (6.126: *facilis descensus Averno*) the narrator explains that “the descent to Hades is easy because everything goes downhill” (13.3: *omnia proclivia sunt, facile descenditur*).²⁹ Narcissus is frightened at the sight of the black, hairy, hundred-headed³⁰ Cerberus lying in the darkness, but he nonetheless announces at the top of his voice that “Claudius is coming.” Claudius' victims welcome the dead emperor like a reborn Osiris; they clap their hands and sing in Greek: “We have found him; let us rejoice.”³¹

²⁷ Eden 1984 *ad loc.*: “Suicide and lack of ceremonial burial gave him the ‘short cut’ he needed to reach the underworld before the predeceased Claudius.”

²⁸ *quid di ad homines?* The Latin could also mean “What business do the gods have with mortals?”

²⁹ The allusion is noted by Eden and all the commentators.

³⁰ Seneca acknowledges here his debt to Horace's underworld: *Cerberus vel, ut ait Horatius, “belua centiceps”* (13.3).

³¹ For this ritual cry of the Isis-cult see Eden 1984 *ad loc.*

I have singled out Claudius' arrival in the underworld as a conclusion because it balances Claudius' arrival in heaven and is also marked by epic parody. The epic intertexts are again Homer and Virgil: Hermes conducting the souls of the suitors to Hades (in Seneca's unheroic version Mercury literally drags Claudius there — a little earlier he had also resorted to neck twisting); Odysseus in Hades; Aeneas' descent in the underworld. Claudius who asks the crowd of his victims: "How did you come here?" poses as Aeneas and Odysseus who ask the shades of Palinurus and Elpenor similar questions. One further Virgilian allusion is remarkably subtle: Narcissus who *still wet* from the baths welcomes Claudius looks like the comic counterpart of Palinurus, Aeneas' trusted helmsman who *was drowned at sea* and who is also the *first* shade Aeneas talks to in the underworld (*Aen.* 6.337–83).

Claudius' deification may have been rejected in heaven, but upon arrival in the underworld the dead emperor is welcomed as a reborn god. "Rebirth" sounds here like an ironic reversal of the decree of the divine council.³² The portrayal of Claudius as a god constitutes furthermore a bitter parody of Aeneas' question to Palinurus: "What *god* tore you from us, Palinurus, and drowned you in mid-ocean?" (*Aen.* 6.341–42). The "god" who sent this crowd of noble Romans to Hades is none other than *the person asking* the question "How did you come here?" — Claudius himself. As Peto Pompeius, one of his victims, cries out: "You ask how we came here? Who but *you* sent us here, *you*, the murderer of all the friends that you ever had?"

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³² For other aspects of Claudius-Osiris see Eden 1984 *ad loc.*

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Hell in Zoroastrian History

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Abstract

The present article surveys some relevant developments of conceptualizations of hell in the R̥g-Veda, the Avestan corpus and the Middle Persian (Pahlavi) literature of the Zoroastrians, where hell is more extensively discussed. The article concludes by looking at the belief in heaven and hell among the world-wide Zoroastrian diaspora communities, urban laity in Mumbai, and professional priests in Western India.

Keywords

Zoroastrianism, hell, eschatology, ethics, sins, priests

...*a-dānīh*... *čīyōn mahist parwānag ī ō dušox*
...ignorance... which (is) the greatest guide to hell
(*Zādspram* 30:38)

In his groundbreaking work *La philosophie de l'histoire* from 1765 the French enlightenment philosopher Voltaire challenged some main paradigms of established European historiography. Based on the idea of the principal unity and continuity of mankind, Voltaire replaced the idea of salvation history conceived as a pyramid with Judaeo-Christianity as the top with a more open structure, in which other cultures are assigned significant places. Their contributions to the civilization of mankind are sometimes emphasized as part of Voltaire's campaign against the church and other manifestations of *l'infâme*. For example, Voltaire claims that fundamental aspects of unspoiled religion had originated in the East a long time before they became part of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Zoroastrianism is an important case in point. Having read a Persian Zoroastrian text in Latin translation (published in 1700), Voltaire writes:

... ces Parsis croyaient depuis longtemps un dieu, un diable, une résurrection, un paradis, un enfer. Ils sont les premiers, sans contredit, qui ont établi ces idées... (Voltaire 1969:127)

Thus, Voltaire claims that fundamental ideas such as god, devil, resurrection, paradise, and hell, which constitute something like the doctrinal kernel of Christianity, did in fact originate with Zoroastrianism.¹ The presumed impact of Zoroastrian theological ideas such as monotheism, dualism, angels, demons, eschatology, paradise, apocalypticism, and pollution on the Judaic-Christian traditions have been an important stimulus triggering the academic interest in Zoroastrianism. Nowadays, such claims abound in cyberspace, often based on older scholarly literature. The Oxford Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics, Robert Charles Zaehner (1913–1974), for example, writing in 1961, finds that “the similarities are so great and the historical context so neatly apposite that it would be carrying scepticism altogether too far to refuse to draw the obvious conclusion” (1961:57), namely that Christian concepts of rewards and punishment, heaven and hell, are dependent on Zoroastrian ideas. In his posthumously published work *Lux perpetua*, the Belgian historian of ancient religions Franz Cumont (1868–1947) pointed to what he considered to be quite pervasive Zoroastrian influences, mediated by the “Magians” of Western Asia,² on the transformation of the Greek concept of Hades (Cumont 1949:219–234). Among his strongest points of evidence he pointed to the role of demons as punishers in hell (which we will encounter below) and the idea of punishment by means of fire (which we, contrary to widely shared misconceptions do *not* find in Zoroastrian sources).³ In the present article, we will not discuss these theories or reconstructions. One of their inherent problems is that they often tend to stipulate a consistent Iranian or Zoroastrian framework. In the present article we will, on the contrary, try to historicize Zoroastrian conceptions

¹ See Stausberg 1998:901–46 for Voltaire’s views on Zoroaster.

² Most contemporary scholars no longer believe in the existence of this group (see Beck 1991; de Jong 1997).

³ Against (among others) Cumont, Tardieu (1985) points to Greek, Christian and other traces in one important Zoroastrian Middle Persian text, the *Ardā Virāz Nāmag*, which he regards as a storage basin of various religious ideas and traditions, enriched by some elements of Iranian provenience.

of hell by outlining their development through some major stages of Zoroastrian history.

I. Origins and Early Developments

Mary Boyce (1920–2006), the doyenne of Zoroastrian studies in the late 20th century, has voiced the opinion that Zoroaster was the first to develop a clear conception of an underworld “not merely of negations, but of punishment, in fact as hell” (1996[1975]:84). The *daēnuas*, the “debased” deities of the presumed pre-Zoroastrian “pagan” religion, became its principal “inhabitants, to be execrated by all true followers of the prophet” (ibid.).

Linear developments such as these, where a pre-Zoroastrian religion assumed to have been “reformed” by the “prophet” is reconstructed mainly on the basis of comparative Indo-Iranian philology, are problematic in theoretical and methodological respects (see e.g. Stausberg 2002a:115–17). A claim such as the one advanced by Boyce would be plausible only if it could be shown that there are no traces of hell-like conceptions in the Vedic, more precisely the early Vedic (= R̥gvedic) hymns, the closest linguistic, poetic and to some (unclear) extent also historical cognates of the textual corpus known as the Avesta. Further evidence would then be necessary to substantiate such a claim.

1. *The R̥g-Veda*

Let us therefore start by looking at the early Vedic evidence. Scholars of Vedic religion, most extensively Hermann Oldenberg (1923:536–42), have discussed some five passages that could at first sight appear to be relevant for a conceptualization of hell (RV II.29.6; VII.104; IX.73.8–9; X.14.10–11; X.152.4). There is a consensus in scholarship that most of these passages, some of which allude to people falling or being thrown into a pit, cannot be taken as proof of the existence of a fully developed conceptualization of hell (see e.g. Witzel and Gotō 2007:462; Oberlies 1998:473), especially in comparison with later developments in Indic religions (later Vedas, Buddhism, and Hinduism).

The main positive reference is book VII, hymn 104, verse 3:

*indrāsomā duṣkṛto vavre antaranārambhaṇe tāmasi prā vidhyatam /
yathā nātaḥ punarekaścanodayat tad vāmastu saḥase manyumacchavaḥ*

Indra and Soma, throw forth the evil-doers into the enclosure, into the anchorless darkness |

So that not one may ever get out of there, so may your fierce might prevail over them

It remains unclear (and also depends on one's concept of hell) whether the notion of an anchorless, dark enclosure into which evildoers are plunged by rightly wrathful deities can be meaningfully classified as a hell.⁴ Be that as it may, one needs to bear in mind that this last hymn of the seventh book appears to be an additional text, which, moreover, appears to have some unusual features. One is the use of the word *tāmas-* ("darkness"), which according to Stephanie Jamison (1991:267 n.227) is used only twice in the RV outside the passages pertaining to the villain Svarbhānu. The other passage is RV I.182.6, which refers to a son of Tugra who had been cast down into the waters and was "thrown forth into the anchorless darkness." Note that the darkness is here too characterized as "anchorless" (*anārambhané*). These are the only passages in the RV where the root \sqrt{vyadh} is used together with *prā*, yielding the literal meaning "to wound forth" (Jamison 1991:267 n.227). Thus, not only is the concept of a space vaguely reminiscent of a "hell" in RV VII.104.3 somewhat unique in the RV, but it is accompanied by unusual linguistic features which further indicate its marginal position. The verse describes an amorphous, dark place, which is located somewhere in the abyss below, some kind of enclosure (a dungeon or a pit) from which it seems impossible to escape, and into which evildoers are thrown so that the deities can torment them. Since this place has no proper name, it can be regarded as a hell *avant le lettre*.

2. The House of Lie in the Gāthās

Let us now turn to the *Gāthās*, presumably the earliest part of the Avestan corpus, often ascribed to its eponymous "founder," Zarathustra/Zoroaster (but see Stausberg 2007). A linguistic observation seems as a reasonable

⁴ Among Vedic scholars, Witzel and Gotō (2007:462) reject this verse as evidence for the notion of hell, while Oldenberg (1923:538) on the contrary finds it difficult to dismiss it as evidence.

starting point: the fact that *təmah-*, the Avestan equivalent to Vedic *tāmas-* (“darkness”), used in the passage discussed above (RV VII.104.3) to qualify the hell-like place, is attested twice in the *Gāthās*.

In Yasna 44, from the second *Gāthā*, the poet, identified by many as Zarathushtra, inquires of Ahura Mazdā which craftsman had fashioned the lights and the darkness (plural!) (Y. 44.5). In this context, the word does not appear to refer to a hell-like state. The second passage (Y. 31.20) is in the first *Gāthā*. It is one of those verses where translators are hopelessly at variance with each other. There is, however, a consensus that, in the second part, the executors of the Lie (*drəguuantō*), the deceitful ones, are threatened because of their own actions with an extended stay in darkness (singular!), foul nourishment (food and drink), and the word “woe.” It seems that we are here encountering the notion of a separate space characterized by some extremely unpleasant features.

Foul nourishment (*duš.xʷarəθa-*) is also mentioned in a verse of the short last *Gāthā* (Y. 53.6). It again appears in the accusative singular, apparently as something that the deceitful ones offer. Unfortunately, this verse seems even more obscure than Y. 31.20.⁵ Bad food (*akāiš xʷarəθāiš*), here used in an instrumental plural, is also a key ingredient of the next verse to be considered in this context. This verse (Y. 49.11) from the third *Gāthā* appears less ambiguous. Humbach translates as follows:

But the deceitful of bad rule, bad action, bad word,
 of bad religious view, (and) bad thought:
 (the) souls come to meet (them) with foul food⁶
 (and) they will be welcome guests in the house of deceit.
 (Humbach 1991:182; see also Humbach and Ichaporia 1994:91)

Apparently, this verse speaks of the bad food that the souls (*uruuanō* = nominative plural) in an instrumental sense will present in the future to subjects whose achievements are bad. The verse continues by saying

⁵ See Kellens and Pirart (1991:270): “Les difficultés métriques et lexicales se combinent pour rendre cette strophe presque entièrement incompréhensible.”

⁶ Kellens and Pirart (1988:174) translate c as follows: “leur (propre) être leur fait tribu de mauvaises nourritures.”

that the souls will then be welcomed in the house of the Lie. Is that a proper noun for what may be classified as “hell”?

The House of Lie (*drūjō dāmāna-*) is mentioned in two other verses in the *Gāthās*. In one verse from the third *Gāthā* (Y. 46.11), we find it used in combination with the notion of the guest (*asti-*, Vedic *ātithi-*). The verse in question is one of the prime examples of early Zoroastrian individual eschatology. In Humbach’s translation it reads as follows:

Through (their) powers, the Karapans and Kavis yoke
a mortal one together with evil actions in order to destroy (his) existence
Their own soul and their own religious view will recoil from them
when they will have reached the place of the account-keeper’s bridge,⁷
(and they will remain) for all time guests (attached) to the house of deceit.
(Y. 46.11; Humbach1991:171 [see also Humbach and Ichaporia 1994:79])

The verse seems to be saying that the *karapan* and the *kauui*, the main categories of the religious adversaries of the in-group, are able to tie the mortals to bad actions so that, when they reach the point of decision over their future destiny, they will become guests of the house of deceit. While this house is not specified, it is made clear that being a guest in that house is an irreversible state — one remains there *yauuōi vīspāi*, literally for “all life-times.”

In a verse from the fourth *Gāthā* (Y. 51.14), the exact meaning of which is again rather obscure, the *karapan* themselves are singled out as ultimately ending up in the House of Lie. From the grammatical structure of the sentence it seems clear that it is because of their neglect of the orders of the Wise Lord and their dissociation from the Cow (and pasture), as well as because of their own acts and utterances, that they will reach the House of Lie (Y. 51.14). The following verse (Y. 51.15) shows that this House of Lie is constructed in correspondence with the House of Welcome (*garō dāmānē*), to which Ahura Mazdā goes first (Y. 51.15b). The verse also mentions the (eschatological) reward that Zarathushtra had assigned to the *magauuan*,⁸ the positive antagonists

⁷ This is the *cinuuant- pərəθu-*, a term which is variously interpreted and translated; see now Hintze (2000:258 n.39) who suggests the translation “Brücke des Büßers” (“bridge of the penitent”).

⁸ On this verse, see Hintze 2000:142, 147, 159.

of the *karapan*, as Zarathushtra's allies. The House of Welcome is mentioned in two other verses, from which it appears that laudations are stored there (Y. 45.8) and that this is the place where the poet hopes to be heard (Y. 50.4).

What can we conclude from this admittedly brief analysis (one of the main weaknesses of which is that, for lack of space, it has to ignore the intra-textual contexts)? I think we can conclude that there is a pair of terms, the House of Welcome and the House of Lie respectively, which appear to be linked to the several protagonists of the unfolding conflict between Ahura Mazdā and his supporter(s) on the one hand and the Lie (*druj-*) and the powers of evil on the other. Thus, “heaven” and “hell” are here in the process of emerging as conceptual labels, while the R̥gvedic texts have not taken that step. Contrary to the Vedic verse quoted above, where the deities are exhorted to throw the villains into an amorphous space, the materials from the *Gāthā* consistently make it a point that it is their actions and other deliberately caused states of those affiliated with the Lie or their neglect of Ahura Mazdā that cause them to end up there. The poet exhorts the Wise Lord to see to it that this mechanism is effectuated, but Ahura Mazdā is not himself exhorted to put the deceitful ones in the House of Lie. From one verse (Y. 46.11) it seems that the deceitful ones will remain in the House of Lie forever. Darkness is only indirectly mentioned as a feature, but bad nourishment/food is a major characteristic. This can be linked to the concept of guesthood, for the guests in the House of Lie will enjoy a miserable form of hospitality. Moreover, contrary to the Vedic evidence, the House of Lie is clearly recognizable as an eschatological space.

These conclusions might tempt one to nominate Zoroaster, the alleged composer of the *Gāthās*, as the inventor of hell (see Boyce above). Such a conclusion only seems warranted to the detriment of neglecting the later Indian developments. However, already in the later Vedas the notion of hell seems to be well attested (see Oldenberg 1923:537). The assumption of a prophetic innovation or reform (which is something like a basic assumption of many reconstructions of early Zoroastrianism) is not a necessary precondition for the genesis of the conceptualizations of hell, nor does hell emerge only as a result of a dualistic cosmology. Instead of speculating on origins let us turn to later developments.

3. Terms for Hell or Hell-like States in the Younger/Standard Avesta

While we can observe the emergence, if not the full conceptual unfolding, of an explicit notion of a hell in the *Gāthās*, this “invention of hell” is not the point of departure for a direct line of development in the (supposedly) later textual traditions. For the neat pair of terms that we found in the *Gāthās* is not attested in the remaining, presumably later, Avestan corpus. Once, a “massive house of a deceitful one” (*sūrəm nmānəm druuatō*) is mentioned (Yt. 5.38), but the House of Lie is nowhere attested outside the *Gāthās*. However, the House of Welcome (in its Standard/Younger Avestan form as *garō.nmāna-*) is.⁹ Apparently, it has remained a standard name for “paradise.”

In general, the Avestan texts are not much concerned with “heaven” and “hell.” There are three closely interrelated terms referring to what we might call “hell” or “a hell-like state.” None of them occurs frequently. One is *aṇhu-lahu- acišta-* (“the worst being/existence”). This form seems from the very term itself¹⁰ to be built on inferences from the *Gāthās*. In the penultimate section of the *Yasna*, Ahura Mazdā exhorts Zarathustra to pronounce the words that he (= Ahura Mazdā) had revealed to him (= Zarathustra) at the “ultimate turning point of life” (*ustəme uraaēse gaīiehe*) so that (by pronouncing these words) his soul will be kept away at a given distance from “the worst being/existence” (Y. 71.15). The “worst existence” thus appears to be conceptualized in spatial and eschatological terms, that is, a place it is possible to reach, but from which one rather keeps a distance.¹¹ While the *Yasna*

⁹ Bartholomae (1979[1904]:512–13) lists 8 occurrences of this word in the Standard/Younger Avestan corpus.

¹⁰ The words *aṇhuš acištō* occur in conjunction in Y. 30.4 (b/c), but although both are in the nominative singular, recent translators such as Humbach and Kellens/Pirart, apparently for metrical reasons, separate the words in their translation. They do not translate them as “the worst being/existence,” but as “I’existence (de la) pire” (Kellens/Pirart 1988:111), making it appear as if *acištō* was a genitive, or they split the construction: “...and how his existence will be in the end. (The existence) of the deceitful will be very bad...” (Humbach/Ichaporía 1994:31).

¹¹ A Gāthic point of departure is Y. 51.6, which speaks of the “final turning point of existence,” apparently as a certain temporal moment, when the person who has failed to care for Ahura Mazdā will be assigned to “what is worse than bad,” something like hell, whereas the person who has the right relationship to Ahura Mazdā obtains “what is better than good.”

shows the recipient a way to avoid ending up in that place (by pronouncing the revealed words), the final verse of the long fifth chapter of the *Vendidad* threatens that one who disregards the laws of dealing with corpses will attain the existence of the executors of Lie (*abūm... druuantqm*), the evildoers, an existence which is here qualified as dark, consisting of darkness,¹² and emanating from darkness, and which is referred to, possibly as a gloss (Bartholomae 1979 [1904]:109), as “the worst being/existence” (V. 5.62). The emphasis on darkness refers back to the *Gāthās*, and Y. 31.20c (mentioned above) is actually inserted into this verse. Here, however, the state of eschatological being is not clearly conceived in spatial metaphors.¹³

This verse is possibly copied from the final verse of the eighteenth chapter of the *Vendidad*, which states, in the context of a discussion of possible means to expiate the transgression of having sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman, that if one applies a pain (punishment) one will attain “the existence/being of the executors of Truthfulness/Righteousness” (*abūm... yim ašaonqm*), whereas those who do not will attain that of the “executors of Lie” (*abūm... yim druuantqm*). Here we encounter a clear parallelism between the rewards of the good and evil people respectively. The term *abu... druuantqm* (“existence of the executors of the Lie”) denotes a hell-like state of eschatological existence without any clear spatial characteristics.

The third Standard/Young Avestan term denoting something like “hell,” which also builds on the word *aṇhu-lahu-* (“being”; “existence”; “life”), but has no clear Gāthic antecedent, is *daožayha-*, literally “[place of] bad being/existence.” In two places it has the epithet *ərəyant-*, likewise not attested in the *Gāthās*, meaning something like “tumultuous” (JamaspAsa/Humbach 1971:63; Hintze 1994a:233–34), “uproarious,” or “raging.” This adjective is also used twice to characterize flies (V. 7.2; 14.6). In the final verse of the 19th chapter of the *Vendidad*, after the demons have wondered how they might finish off Zarathustra, they recede to “the bottom of the dark being/existence, [to] the tumultuous hell” (V. 19.47). *daožayha-* is here indexed as a spatial category, the

¹² In Yt. 19.95 the Lie is qualified with the same term (*təmaṇhaēna-*).

¹³ Bartholomae had understood the verbal form *paθiiaite* to mean “hineingelangen” (obtain access to), which would suggest a spatial metaphor. Kellens (1984:20, n.1), however, has restored the reading to mean “disposer de” (possess).

habitat of the demons, characterized as deep and dark. In that sense it seems to correspond to a prototypical notion of hell (i.e. a familiar notion of hell primarily derived from the Christian tradition, then absorbed, enlarged and fine-tuned in scholarly contexts).¹⁴

After V. 3 and 18, this is the third chapter of the *Vendidād* which concludes with a reference to hell or something similar. “Hell” seems to be a *topos* in the rhetoric of this text. The probably best known Avestan reference to “hell,” however, occurs in a *Yāšt* (“hymn”), in a passage that describes the fights between the early heroes and their adversaries. According to this account, the great Avestan hero Kərəsāspa smashes an enemy with leaden jaws and hands of stones and who claims not yet to be of age. After coming of age, this Snāuuḍika makes the following boast:

I will lead down the Beneficial Spirit
From the luminous House of Welcome
I will make the Foul Spirit rush up
From the Tumultuous Hell.
They both shall pull my chariot,
The Beneficial and the Foul Spirit
Unless the manly-minded Kərəsāspa slays me. (Y. 19.44a-d)¹⁵

What we learn from this proclamation of hubris is that the “tumultuous hell” is the residence of the Foul Spirit, that his residence is below and that the Foul Spirit may rush up from it for his destructive exploits.

To conclude our survey of the Avestan corpus, we need to look at the *Hādōxt Nask*, which is an account of what will happen to the soul of the deceased. Just as the soul of the executor of Truth/Righteousness, the soul of the executor of Lie takes four steps into the other world. It inhales a foul-smelling wind. The three first steps are not described, but the fourth and final one leads the soul of the deceiver into the Infinite Darkness (plural!) (HN 2.33). This may vaguely remind us of the Gāthic passage referred to above (Y. 31.20), where the word, however, appears in the singular. In any case, the composite *anayra- tāmah-* is a

¹⁴) Consulting main encyclopedias and dictionaries in religious studies, one finds astonishingly little conceptual effort spent on this term. For the purposes of this article, a discussion seems unnecessary.

¹⁵) For translations see Humbach/Ichaporla 1998:124; Hintze 1994a:232; Hintze 1994b:24; Skjærvø 2005:114.

hapax in the Avestan texts, and it may well have been reconstructed in analogy to the *anayra- raocā*, the Infinite Lights which are attested in this as well as in some other Avestan texts.

II. Developments of Hell in Middle Persian (Pahlavi) Literature

When proceeding to the Zoroastrian writings in Middle Persian, the so-called Pahlavi-literature, we need to recall that we are crossing a period of at least a millennium, or even more likely a millennium and a half, which separates the Middle Persian from the Avestan texts. One starting point is to look at the Middle Persian translations of the Avestan texts.

The Middle Persian version of *Hādōxt Nask* 2.27–33 literally translates *anayra- raocā* as *asar rōšnīg*, the Infinite Light. This compound remains a common term in the Pahlavi books as one of the names for heaven. Its opposite, *asar tārīkīh*, the Middle Persian form of *anayra- tāmāh-*, does not seem to have become a common word. In the Pahlavi texts, hell is mostly known as *dušox*, the Middle Persian form of the Avestan *daožay*"ha-.¹⁶

Compared to the Avestan corpus, there is an abundance of textual sources on hell in the Middle Persian theological literature. The present analysis cannot claim to be an exhaustive treatment of the subject. Before turning to main features of the perception, or construction, of hell in the Pahlavi books from the Islamic Middle Ages (9th century onwards), it is important to look at the first clearly datable reference to hell.

1. The First Dated Occurrence: Kirdīr (3rd Century CE)

The first dated references to "hell" are found in one of the four inscriptions that the high priest Kirdīr had carved in stone in the late third century CE. Among historians of religion, Kirdīr is maybe best known for his opposition to Mani and as partly responsible for the latter's execution. In his inscriptions — the only major inscriptions not carved by a king! — Kirdīr recounts his remarkable career and his achievements in propagating and restructuring the Zoroastrian religion (see e.g. Stausberg 2002a:222–26). Interestingly, despite his wide-ranging

¹⁶⁾ In the form *dozah* this word continues in New Persian as the one word of Persian origin used for "hell."

public claims, Kirdīr has been all but forgotten in the later Zoroastrian historical texts.

Two of Kirdīr's inscriptions, at Sar Mašhad and at Naqš-i Rostam, contain an account of a visit to the netherworld. In these accounts (which are preserved in a fragmentary state), the priest asks the gods to show him heaven and hell, and he is assured that their *dēn* ("religious consciousness") will lead (the souls of) the saved ones to heaven and (the soul of) the damned ones to hell. At the end, after his visit/vision, the priest proclaims that he has been reassured about the actual existence of heaven and hell (*dwšhw*) (§§ 22 and 35–37 in the currently accepted reconstruction [see Gignoux 1991]).¹⁷ The inscriptions provide no details about hell. Probably as part of a discourse aiming at providing legitimacy to his extensive claims for religious authority, Kirdīr communicates his vision of the other world, with heaven or hell as the final destinations of the (souls of the) departed.

2. *The Knowledge of Hell and the Cognitive Evaluation of the Present Situation*

Some Pahlavi writings regard heaven and hell as essential features of the Zoroastrian religion. One text, belonging to the genre of wisdom-literature, states, with reference to anonymous religious authorities of previous ages:

They held this too: Every man's duty is to know these five things; he who does not know them is under guilt. One is this: "What am I, a man or a demon?" One is this: "Where have I come from, from paradise or from hell?" One is this: "What do I stand by, by the things of the gods or by those of the demons?" One is this: "Whom do I follow, good people or wicked people?" One is this: "Where shall I go back, to paradise or to hell?" (Dk. VI 298 [= Shaked 1979:115])

Of course, all these questions have implications for the present. Heaven and hell, in particular, are basic points of cognitive reference for evaluating the present situation. One should always remember and fear hell:

¹⁷ Note that we are here dealing with a reconstruction. The word *dwšhw* is materially attested in KNRm 64 and KNRb 5; the remaining instances (KSM 28/KNRm 53; KSM 29; KSM 52) are emendations.

They held this too: Each man... should hold the things of the spirit in memory at every moment and time — both the goodness of paradise and the evil of hell. At a moment when comfort, good things and joy have accrued to him, he should think this: “It will indeed be good there in paradise, when even here it is so good...” At a period when distress, grief, evil and pain have accrued to him, he should think this: “It will indeed be bad there in hell when it is so bad even here; when from the great goodness of Ohrmazd, with which there is no evil intermixed over there, it is (still) so bad here.” (Dk. VI 16 [= Shaked 1979:9])

Unlike the protological past and the eschatological end, the present situation is characterized by a mixture of the divine and the demonic, the pure and the impure, good and evil, joy and sorrow, peace and war. Focusing on paradise is an imaginary strategy aiming at a conscious cognitive un-mixing of the present, by extracting from the present mixture that which is good only. For hell, there is the inverse strategy: even the worst things one has to endure in this life pale in comparison to the un-mixed suffering one has to endure there.

Manuščihr, a ninth-century priest, explains that hell is so terrible precisely because evil there appears in such an un-mixed, that is, unmitigated, form that it has hardly any similarity with this world (Dd. 26.5 [= Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998:86–87]).

3. *Anticipating Hell*

Dēnkard VI narrates the story of two priests (*ērbad*) who carried firewood from a mountain on their backs. They were quite exhausted. Asked by a high-priest why they were doing that sort of work, they replied that they had heard that everybody had to undergo some discomfort created by Ahreman, either in this world, the visible/material existence, or in the other world, the invisible/conceptual/spiritual existence. So they preferred to experience their share of discomfort in this world, where they would still see the sun and the moon and obtain nourishment, medicine, and remedies, because the discomfort one had to suffer in the invisible world would be without the addition of any good thing (Dk. VI D 5 [= Shaked 1979:181–83]). Experiencing the hell-like qualities of this world is preferable to having the full share of it in the other world. This account seems to imply that the experience of hell, or hell-like experiences, cannot be avoided, but that suffering in this world can be tolerated since it is mitigated by the presence of some

good elements. In line with this approach, another passage from *Dēnkard* VI praises the man who, as far as possible, endures hell in the visible/material world (*dušox pad gētīg be barēd*) (Dk. VI 305 [= Shaked 1979:121]).

Accordingly, as Manuščihr argues, there is an inverse relationship between the troubles suffered by the good people in this world and the joy they experience in the other world, to such an extent that “fear of the pain and punishment of hell” actually makes people refrain from pleasures in this world and makes them more virtuous (Dd. 5.5 [= Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998:52–53]). Manuščihr also points to difficulties in cognitively anticipating the reality of hell. For according to him hell is different from other things since in the case of hell the real thing is worse than what one fears it might be, whereas “the fear of every other thing is more than the thing itself” (Dd. 26,8 [= Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998:88–89]). Another Pahlavi text names the lack of “fear of hell” (*bīm az dušox*) as a sign of the catastrophic state of things at the end of the millennium (ZŴY 4.40 [= Cereti 1995:138, 155]).

While these texts recommend the fear of hell as an attitude towards this world, this position was not unanimously shared. There is one text which explicitly advises that one should not focus one’s thoughts strongly on hell since there is expiation for every sin in the Zoroastrian religion.¹⁸ One should not consider anybody as “without hope of heaven” (ŠnŠ 12.28 [= Kotwal 1969:36–37]).

4. *Strategies of Hell-Avoidance*

In line with the strategy of exposing oneself to hell-like experiences in order to avoid hell and the emphasis on the positive, but difficult task of fearing hell, several writings advise their readers to actively take precautions so as not to end up in hell. This is indicated by the expression not to “reject the soul,” or, in positive terms, to do things “for the sake of the soul” (see Shaked 1990).

In the Pahlavi translation of an Avestan text one finds the gloss that there are things that “save one’s soul from hell” (*ruwān az dušox... bōxtan*) (Ner. II 66.4 [= Kotwal and Kreyenbroek 2003:280–81]). At

¹⁸⁾ This statement is legitimated by a quotation from the *Gāthās* (Y. 32.7).

least according to the priestly point of view mirrored in this text, this must be the main preoccupation of the faithful.

Apart from doing good things and avoiding evil ones, another strategy was to do repentance:

They held this too: From repentance there is no way to hell. (Dk. VI 50 [= Shaked 1979:19]).

Accordingly, the long formulaic texts of repentance, the so-called *Patīt*, which are recited in ritual contexts, invariably contain the performative statement that repentance has been spoken by the believer either “from the great dread of hell” (PP I and II 12.3 [= Dhabhar 1963:120, 147]) or for “shutting the way to hell and for opening the way to paradise” (XP 13 [= Dhabhar 1963:156]). Only by submitting his body and his possessions to the chiefs, by repenting mentally and by the chiefs absolving him, will the one who has committed deadly sins (*marg-arzān*) be saved from hell (ŠnŠ 8.5 [Tavadia 1930:105–6]). If no repentance is made, the sinner will unavoidably go to hell (ŠnŠ 8.7 [Tavadia 1930:106]).

The main concern of the Zoroastrian texts is of course that Zoroastrians should be saved from hell. This, however, does not automatically imply that all non-Zoroastrians invariably end up in hell. A ritualistic treatise quotes one authority as having stated that a non-Zoroastrian (*ag-dēn*, literally “of evil religion”) saves himself from hell if he does merely one good deed more than bad ones (ŠnŠ 6.5 [Tavadia 1930:97]).¹⁹

The easiest way to avoid hell, of course, is to accumulate more good thoughts, words or deeds than bad. Some virtues, however, are praised as particularly efficient to avoid hell.²⁰ A catechism highlights gratefulness (ČHP 30 [= Kanga 1960:16–17]). This virtue is also praised in the wisdom literature as a way to save one’s soul (Dk. VI 120; E38c; E45f [= Shaked 1979:48–49; 206–7; 214–15]), sometimes in conjunction with other virtues such as contentment and tenderness. Generosity is also

¹⁹ Since this opinion is presented as that of one authority (whose name is given), one might surmise that it was not generally shared.

²⁰ Likewise there are some sins that immediately lead to hell, such as performing worship while thinking that the gods do not exist (Dk. VI D1b [= Shaked 1979:176–77]), standing when urinating (MX 1.39 [Skjærvø 2005:242]), or ignorance, bad knowledge and lack of wisdom (WZ 30.38–39 [= Gignoux and Tafazzoli 1993:104–7]).

emphasized as saving the soul from hell (Dk. IX 6.3 [see West 1892:179]), as is righteousness (Dk. IX 17.3 [see West 1892:204]).

The *Pahlavi Rivayāt Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, probably from the late 9th or early 10th century, emphasizes the practice of next-of-kin marriage (*xwēdōdah*) as a way to salvation (or rescue) from hell (*bōxtišn az dušox*), even in case of the most grievous sins (PRDd. 8b1 [= Williams 1990:11]). The practice of next-of-kin marriage rescues one from hell, which is referred to as “the prison of Ahreman and the demons” (PRDd. 8b3 [= Williams 1990:11]). The emphasis on the “miraculous” character of this practice possibly correlates with difficulties in implementing the practice.

5. *The Temporal Limitations of Hell*

In the *Gāthās* we have seen that the “souls” and “religious views” of the condemned remain in the House of Lie “for all times” (Y. 46.11; see I.2. above). The Pahlavi sources, however, consistently emphasize that hell will be destroyed during the eschatological transfiguration of the world, which implies that the souls of the sinners will be released from hell at that time (see e.g. Dd. 31.8; 40.4; Dk. IX 17.6).²¹ Even the inhabitants of hell are aware of the fact that their suffering will end after 9,000 years at the latest, although they hardly derive any consolation from that knowledge in their present tribulations (AVN 54.6).

At the end of time, however, after the general resurrection but before Ahreman and the demons are conquered and hell is abolished, mankind will again be reckoned, and, much to the dismay of their friends and family, all sinners (who lament to their relatives that they should have warned them about the terrible fate they are now suffering)²² will be forcefully put back into hell for a period of renewed suffering lasting three nights (Bd. 34.13–15; WZ 35.40–47;²³ ŠnŠ 8.7 [empha-

²¹) Zaehner 1976:132 puts it quite philosophically: “No man is punished eternally for sins committed in time.” No such reasoning is provided by the sources.

²²) The moral appeal of this scene is evident.

²³) Zādspram narrates an episode describing how the righteous will be separated from the sinners: a great fire (here apparently to be understood as a divine agent) comes from the endless light, filling the air with light. The fire carries what looks like the trunk of a tree with branches at the top and roots below. There is one branch and one root for each sinner and righteous soul respectively. A divinity or a demon passes the

sizing the severe punishments to be suffered for grievous sins]; Dd. 31.10 [purification by “washing with molten metal”]). Then, according to Zādspram, they are released by the divine agent Ērman (av. Airiïman) (WZ 35.49).²⁴

According to the *Bundahišn* (*Foundational Creation*), the Fire (here apparently understood as a divine agent), together with Ērman, will melt the metals in the hills and mountains, causing them to flow over the earth like a river. All have to pass through this stream of molten metal, and thus they will be purified, but while this is a pleasant experience for the righteous, for the sinners it will be exactly like walking through molten metal (Bd. 34.18–19).²⁵ This collective purification is followed by a state of mutual love and friendship (Bd. 34.20).

According to another source, the *Dēnkard*, this final purification is part of the suffering which the souls undergo in hell. As a result they will be purified from their contamination of sin and will be “again clothed in a garment of the same substance, and they enjoy perfect bliss eternally and without interruption” (Dk. III 272 [= Zaehner 1972:262; see de Menasce 1973:273]). The high-priest Manuščihr says that they become “righteous, pain-free, immortal, fearless, and free from evil” (Dd. 31.11 [= Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998:102–3]).

According to the *Bundahišn*, at the eschatological transfiguration of the world, not only will the sinners be purified and released,²⁶ but hell itself will be purified by the stream of molten metal, and its stench and filth will be burnt by the molten metal (not directly by the fire!) and then it will become clean (Bd. 34.31). The part of the world where hell was located will then be joined with the remaining extension of the world (Bd. 34.32). These statements lead us to the question of the topography of hell.

branch or the root to the righteous and the sinners. In this way the two groups are separated (WZ 35.40). Note that the fire is here a divine actor carrying the trunk and lightening up the scene. It should not be confused with a cosmic fire.

²⁴) WZ 30.51 in passing uses the metaphor of prison for hell.²⁴⁾

²⁵) Note that this does not amount to a cosmic fire; the Fire is merely required to melt the metal (which is the purifying agent here).

²⁶) Zaehner 1976:132 argues that this aspect of hell makes it similar to a purgatory.

6. *The Topography and Ecology of Hell*

Since the avoidance of hell was recommended as a constant mental preoccupation, it is only natural that the question arose as to what hell might be like. After all, if one is required to have something permanently on one's mind, one needs to have some idea of what it is.²⁷

In the late 9th century, questions about the nature of hell, its punishments, pain and discomforts, as well as the food served there, were apparently posed to the high-priest Manuščihr and he replied to them in his book *Religious Judgements* (*Dādestān ī dēnīg*) (Dd.). Here is a brief summary of the information provided by Manuščihr, synoptically collated with and supplemented by information provided by some other texts such as the “anthology” of Manuščihr's brother Zādspram (*Wizīdagihā ī Zādspram*) (WZ), the *Ardā Virāz Nāmag* (*Book of the Righteous Virāz*) (AVN), the *Dādestān ī mēnōg ī xrad* (*Judgements of the Spirit of Wisdom*) (MX), the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* (ZWY), the fifth book of the *Dēnkard* (Dk.), and the *Bundahišn* (*Foundational Creation*) (Bd.). Most descriptors (i.e. terms describing the location) of hell hyperbolize in the extreme negative aspects of ordinary life.²⁸ Some descriptors appear predictable in theological, classificatory and cognitive terms. The extreme phenomena are all a means to express the supposed suffering of the souls of the sinners.

To begin with, Manuščihr provides the following concise description: “it is below, deep, and underground, most dark, most fetid, and most terrible, most unwanted, and worst, the place and the dwelling of demons and she-demons” (Dd. 26.2 [= Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998:86–87]).²⁹ Hell is filthy (Dd. 26.4; MX 1.119).³⁰ Apart from demons and

²⁷ The available information is also summarized (but organized differently) in the entries “Dūzak” (M. Shaki) and “Hell. I. In Zoroastrianism” (Ph. Gignoux) in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (available online at www.iranica.com); see also Gignoux 1968.

²⁸ The descriptors are therefore not counter-intuitive in the sense of the term established by cognitive approaches to the study of religion (i.e. as violating ontological categories).

²⁹ Among the many demons inhabiting hell, slander (*spazgih*) is unique: it is such a grievous sin that the slander-demon moves backward, while all other move forward (MX 2.8–12).

³⁰ From a Douglasian point of view this is to be expected, for dirt is matter out of place, and hell is a place where the divine order is absent.

she-demons, hell is also the abode of sorcerers and witches (WZ 7.28; ZWY 3.27). It also houses the noxious animals (*xraftar*), creatures of Ahreman; in hell even small noxious animals appear big as mountains (AVN 18.8).

Hell is regarded as Ahreman's residence or prison (ZWY 3.23; Bd. 4.27; Bd. 6j.0; PRDd. 8b3). In *illo tempore* Ahreman had pierced a hole into the good creation, and hell is located at the spot, in the middle of the earth, where the Foul Spirit had pierced the earth “like a snake coming out of its hole” (WZ 2.5; Bd. 4.28). Ahreman and the demons strive to escape hell in order to create chaos in the world, but they are sometimes cast back into hell — as after the appearance of Zarathustra on the cosmic scene (WZ 10.19), or by performing certain rituals (Dk. IX 14.2: the demons rush forward from hell in order to cause destruction, but by performing the *drōn* they are pushed back [see West 1892:197]).

The topography of hell is not entirely consistent. It may be located in the middle of the earth as well in the north (Dd. 31.6), the direction of Ahreman and all evil agents.

Hell is either icy or terribly hot (MX 6.27). The *Bundahišn* explains both phenomena by the connection of hell to the planets (Bd. 26.54).

Hell is deep down (Dd. 32.6), like a pit (*čāh*) (AVN 18.3; 54.2).³¹ The *Bundahišn* constructs a homology between hell and the anus (Bd. 28.10 [see Lincoln 2007:92]). Some texts state that it is underneath the earth (Dd. 31.6; WZ 35.22; Dk. V 8.2). Some sources connect it to a specific locality in the sacred geography, namely the Arzūr-ridge, also known as the head or neck of Arzūr, a mountain top famous for being the gathering place of the demons *par preference* (Dd. 32.6). Beside Manuščihr, several texts mention that there is a door to hell on this mountain top (Dd. 32.6; *Pahlavi Vendidad* 3.7; PRDd. 50.1; Bd. 9.10; ŠnŠ 13.19; see also Dk. IX 20.2).

Hell is located underneath the bridge leading to the upper regions of the other world (Bd. 30.3). Manuščihr explains that the soul of the

³¹) Dk. V 24.30a (see Amouzgar and Tafazzoli 2000:104–5) notes that, “those who are knowledgeable about the religion don't fall blindly into the pit of the wicked” (*čāh ī druwandān* — which seems to refer to hell). This goes against the assumption that the metaphor of the pit has been adapted from the *Apocalypse of Paul* (where the Greek word φρέαρ is used); see Tardieu 1985:21.

wicked, after the account has been made, “topples head first from the Cīnwad bridge and falls down” (Dd. 31.2 [= Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998: 98–99]). While the *Bundahišn* states that the soul falls right into hell (Bd. 30.25, 31 [Skjærvø 2005:203]), *Manuščihr* provides a somewhat different account: once fallen down, the soul is “oppressively fettered” and conducted to hell by a demon (Dd. 31.3 [= Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998:98–99]). The *Dādestān ī mēnōg ī xrad* presents yet another account: here the demon already fetters the soul beforehand in order to make it proceed to the bridge, and then, maltreating it and ignoring its suffering, crying, and pleading, eventually drags it down into hell (MX 1.103–7 [= Zaehner 1976:136]). *Zādspram*, on the other hand, states that the soul proceeds to hell alone, as if captured by enemies (WZ 30.44 [= Gignoux and Tafazzoli 1993:106–7]).³²

In hell the lonely soul experiences emotions such as pain, torture, sorrow, grief, fear, trouble, and unhappiness. There is no pleasure and delight. Hell is full of evil (Dk. V 8.2; IX 20.2).

Hell is very narrow (AVN 18.3, 5; Dk. V 8.2). This trait is typically connected to other forms of sensual effects: hell is characterized by complete darkness³³ and a horrible stench³⁴ (AVN 18.4; Dk. V 8.2; MX 6.29). The darkness is metaphorically described as so thick that one feels that one can grasp it with one’s hands (AVN 18.4; Bd. 27.53; MX 6.31). Similarly, it feels as if one can cut the stench with a knife (Bd. 27.53).

This state of spatial oppression and sensory deprivation affects the perception of time. It seems to the souls that time passes much more

³² One Middle Persian catechism has a different account of how sinners are transported down to hell. According to this text, known as *Čīdag handarz ī pōryōtkēšān* (*Selected Advice of the Ancient Authorities*), the demon of dismemberment casts an invisible rope around the neck of each person during the parents’ sexual intercourse. One cannot remove that rope, but after death the rope falls from the neck of the righteous, whereas the demon uses that rope to drag the sinners into hell (§§ 31–32; see Kanga 1960:16, 25; Zaehner 1976:24).

³³ The darkness not only obscures light but even prevents the fire from emitting its good smell (AVN 54.3); ZWY 3.23, 27; 7.35 speaks of “darkness and obscurity” (*tār [ud] tom*).

³⁴ This feature corresponds to the primary metaphor “bad is stinky” (see Lakoff and Johnson 1999:50). The “embodied mind” approach might provide explanations for many metaphors for hell.

slowly (AVN 18.7; 54.6). Spatial oppression, sensory deprivation and all the suffering and pain they endure in hell create for the souls a dominant perception of loneliness, which contrasts with the actual overcrowding of hell. The loneliness is “very bad” (Bd. 27.53). The souls cannot hear the cries of their fellow residents in hell, and all think that they are all alone (AVN 54.4–5). Hell is the most unsocial place imaginable.

Even in hell people need food.³⁵ However, as Manuščihir points out, the fetid, rotten, polluted, and unpleasant food served in hell is not eaten with delight, but out of sheer need (Dd. 31.6). The food of hell does not satiate and gives no satisfaction (Dd. 31.6–7). This is another example of the subtraction of all beneficial aspects of ordinary activities in hell. It goes without saying that in heaven, eating is a pure pleasure and the best food imaginable is served. According to one text, Ahreman, the host of hell as it were, exhorts the demons not to treat the hell-dwellers well, but to “serve him (rather) with the filthiest and most foul food that Hell can produce.” Accordingly, the demons serve him “poison and venom, snakes and scorpions and other noxious reptiles (that flourish) in Hell, and they serve him with these to eat” (MX 119–20 [= Zaehner 1976:138]). In the normal order of things, these beings should be killed by the faithful and not under any circumstances be eaten. Hell is a place where the system of purity works in an inverted form. The theme of food links the Middle Persian accounts of hell with the *Gāthās*. It seems that this is because of the dominant social interactional pattern of hospitality, where food and the exchange of gifts play a major part.

7. *Different Sections of Hell*

Just as there are several sections of heaven, some texts point out that hell consists of several parts. According to one account, the soul of the deceitful person takes four steps, the fourth of which leads to hell itself

³⁵ From a cognitive point of view, this is an example of Jesse Bering’s experimentally tested observation that “those states with which people conceptually should have the most difficulty imagining the complete absence of (i.e., epistemic, emotional, and desire states) are attributed to dead agents much more readily than are those states which are frequently absent from our everyday phenomenological reserve (i.e., psychological and perceptual states)” (Bering 2002:288). Apart from cognitive constraints, only the continuation of basic phenomena of life makes hell rhetorically function as a mirror to evaluate the present.

(AVN 17.20) or to the innermost hell, the dwelling-place of Ahreman and the demons (MX 1.116).

Manuščihr presents his readers with a different infernography. According to his *Religious Judgements*, hell consists of three directions, or of “three places,” which “together are called hell” (Dd. 32.6). Interestingly, he reckons the *hamēstagān* as one of them. Elsewhere the *hamēstagān* is defined as the place where the souls are placed of those who end up neither in paradise nor hell because they have an equal share of sins and merits (e.g. AVN 6.3; PhIRDd. 65.2). Manuščihr, however, divides the *hamēstagān* into two parts, one for the righteous, and one for the deceitful, the latter being the first section of hell, which is dark and fetid and full of evil (Dd. 32.3). The second section of hell is the “worst existence” (*wattom axwān*), the abode of the demons, full of evil and torture (Dd. 32.4). The third section he calls *druzaskān*. Actually, the word is the Middle Persian form of an Avestan word which occurs once in the *Vendidād*, where the power of the divine agent Sraoša is praised, who is requested to strike a demon so that he will end up in the *drujas.kanā-* (V. 19.41). That word, it seems, has never gained wider currency, but Manuščihr employs that textual heritage for his construction of a tripartite infernography. He qualifies the *druzaskān* as “the bottom of the house of darkness, where the head of the demons runs” (Dd. 32.5). Our available sources do not permit us to decide whether this tripartite division was generally known, or whether it was merely an intellectual exercise by a learned theologian, articulated maybe in order to negotiate different concepts of hell.

Be that as it may, another division of hell appears in the *Ardā Virāz Nāmag* (*The Book of the Righteous Virāz*). No less than 84 of the 101 chapters (according to the standard modern editions) of this text deal with hell; it is the most detailed description of the other world available in Zoroastrian literature. Given its textual history and various translations, it is also one of the most popular religious writings of the Zoroastrians. The work is impossible to date with any amount of accuracy. The text reports a controlled ritual experiment conducted under the supervision of priests. Different versions of the text place the account in different periods of the past (see Gheiby 2004). As a result of this ritual experiment the soul of the righteous Virāz leaves his body and proceeds to explore the other world in order to dispel the doubts about

the efficacy of the rituals with respect to the other world. Under the guidance of two spiritual beings (Srōš and Ādur or Srōš and Ardwahišt [see Gheiby 2004:95]), Virāz sees the deities and the empty throne of Ahura Mazdā, before being shown around in heaven and hell. His first entry to hell is from the Činwad bridge. Having made a first tour through hell, Virāz is led back, and underneath the Činwad bridge, in the middle of a desert, he is shown the “hell in the earth” (AVN 53.1), from where he hears the complaints and cries from Ahreman, the demons, evil creatures, and the souls of the deceitful (AVN 53.2). So apparently there are two hells, and Virāz proceeds to visit the inner one as well. The general description of this inner hell is not really different from the regular one. Apart from the attributes “dangerous” and fearful” (AVN 54.2), it shares the characteristics of the regular hell, including the loneliness of the sufferers who are not aware of the presence of the many others who, closely packed together, are as many as “a number of the hairs of the mane of a horse” (AWN 54.4 [= Vahman 1986:208]).

Opinions vary on the interpretation of the duplication of hell. Michel Tardieu thinks that the distinction has been borrowed from Christian apocalyptic traditions, in particular the *Apocalypse of Paul* (Tardieu 1985: 22–23), while others see it as a sign of inconsistency resulting from successive and disorganized adaptations (Gignoux 1984:16), or as a result of a process of redaction (Gheiby 2004). Claudia Leurini (2002:216) has argued that there is “some specific regularity” in the distinction between the two hells, but I find her statistical analysis of the frequency and distribution of sins, sinners, and punishments not so compelling that chance distributions are ruled out sufficiently. At this stage I tend to concur with the idea that the redactors have tried to accommodate the idea of a hell inside the earth, as contained in other sources, and to find a place for it in their account. Besides looking for antecedents, one might also consider its communicative function: the distinction may well have served as a literary strategy to catch, or to sustain, attention, amidst the listing of all the sins and their correlating punishments.

8. *Agents and Main Forms of Punishment*

Hell is the dwelling-place of Ahreman, the demons, and the sinners. In the scenario of hell drawn by the *Ardā Virāz Nāmag*, the demons occasionally

serve as assistants for effectuating the severe punishments that the sinners are undergoing. They are pounding, beating, tearing and raking the souls of the sinners. Consonant with the Ahremanic ontology, the theologian Manuščihr remarks that the demons are made strong and powerful by the sins committed by the people; and they torment the sinners to the same extent that they have been empowered by them in the first place (Dd. 31.5). Ultimately, it is only human sin that empowers hell. Especially on those who have committed mortal sins, Manuščihr states, the demons inflict “pain and trouble and devouring and many kinds of stench, and biting and tearing and producing of all evil and discomfort” (Dd. 40.4 [= Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998:170–71]).

Other agents of punishments beside the demons are beasts that devour people. In fact, this is the most common type of punishment. In most cases, however, the agents of punishment are not specified. They are simply referred to as “they.”

As Leurini has calculated, the other most popular types of punishments are ingestion of impure materials, the cutting off of the tongue and hanging by the feet. Desperate weeping, moaning and crying are often mentioned (Leurini 2002:312).

Even if hell appears as quite a gruesome place, the Zoroastrian texts emphasize that the principles of justice and right measure are safeguarded even in hell.

Hell is the place where the sinners — that is, those whose sins outnumber their virtues — will be placed after death. The reckoning of sins and virtues is done in such a way that justice is safeguarded. Justice also prevails in hell, for the divine agent Ašwahišt is allotted the task of supervising that the demons do not inflict greater punishment on the sinners than is their due (Bd. 26.35). The principle of divine justice and righteousness — embodied by Ašwahišt — prevails even in hell, the Ahremanic sphere par excellence, and the demons are prevented from acting in an arbitrary fashion. Even hell is encapsulated within the cosmic order — just as Ahreman’s existence is encapsulated within the time frame set for the cosmic conflict. Accordingly, the *Bundahišn* continues by saying that everybody will eventually reach paradise (Bd. 26.37).

9. *The (Dis)order of Sins*

The *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag* describes the suffering inflicted for specific sins.³⁶ It is unclear whether the description implies that each person is punished for a single, main offence committed, or whether one has to

³⁶ These are the sins, some of which are dealt with in more than one chapter (chapter numbers in parenthesis; + refers to cases where the sinner is gendered as male, * refers to cases where the sinner is gendered as female, indicating prevailing gender roles and stereotypes): +sodomy (19); *approaching water and fire during menstruation (20); +homicide (21); +sexual intercourse during menstruation (22); +eating without ritual precautions (23); *adultery (24); walking with one shoe only (25); *disrespect of husband (26); +cheating with measures in commercial transactions (27); +bad rule (28); +slander and instigating conflict (29); +illegal (= unritualized) slaughter of animals (30); +amassing and retaining wealth (31); +laziness/idleness (32) (in this chapter, the sinner is not presented anonymously, but the text refers to “Davāns who... never performed a good deed, but with his right food he threw a bundle of grass in front of a ploughing ox” [Vahman 1986:205]); +lying (33); *throwing hairs into fire while combing (34); *sorcery (35); +heresy (36); neglecting water and fire (37); +polluting water and fire through excrement and carrion (38); +withholding wages (39); +speaking falsehoods (40); +polluting public bathhouses (41); +fathers denying their legitimate offspring (42); +fathers denying their offspring (43); *abortion (44); +false testimony and extortion (45); +acquisition of wealth by stealing the property of others (46); heretics (47); +maltreatment of dogs (48); +false measurement of land (49); +removal of boundary stones (50); +making false promises (51); +violation of contracts (52); extinguishing sacred fires, destroying bridges, and other sins (55); rejection of gods and religion (56); *keen (57); +washing in (and thereby polluting) lakes or springs (58); *neglecting crying and hungry children (59); +adultery (60); religious doubt [including doubting the evil of hell!] (61); *despising one’s husband (62); *quarrelling with and backtalk to one’s husband (63); *adultery and subsequent abortion (64); disrespect for one’s parents (65); slander (66); +misbehaviour of a governor (67); *adultery (69); *abandoning one’s husband (70); +sodomy and adultery (71); *neglecting menstrual restrictions (72); *using cosmetics and hair of others (73); illegal (= unritualized) slaughter of animals (74); not giving water to farm animals (75); *preparing and serving food during menstruation (76); overburdening of cattle (77); *denial of pregnancy and abortion (78); +taking bribes and false justice (79), selling items with false measures and weights (80); *prostitution and sorcery (81); *tartness with regard to the husband (82); *concealing of meat from husband (83); *poisoning of men (84); *adultery (85); *violation of next-of-kin-marriage (86); *not giving milk to one’s child (87); *adultery (88); lack of benevolence (89); lying (90); +false judgments (91); envy and retaining benefits (92); denying hospitality to travellers (93); *not nursing and thereby killing one’s child and selling one’s milk to other (94); *leaving one’s baby hungry and thirsty and adultery (95); +not sowing the earth (96); lying (97);

undergo successively all the various forms of punishments corresponding to each and every sin committed. The text is obviously not interested in such theological intricacies, but rather wants to make an impression and inspire fear. The punishments suffered by the damned are often physically linked to the kind of sin they have committed.³⁷ This entails an anthropomorphization of the shape of the soul (i.e. the soul has a body).³⁸ The soul of the liar, for example, is punished with having worms gnaw its tongue (AVN 33), and the soul of a woman who has not paid respect to the menstrual taboos is forced to swallow bowls of filth and excrement (AVN 20).³⁹ In communicative and rhetorical terms this helps readers (or listeners) to imagine the expected punishments when reflecting on their own past and future actions.

Already the earliest editors and translators of the text were puzzled by the apparent disorder of the sins as they are depicted.

Regarding the arrangement of the crimes and offences mentioned, there is nowhere any system, or plan, perceptible. All are thrown together, the most heinous crimes may be followed by trifling offences. Several crimes and offences are mentioned more than once, for instance adultery... infanticide..., nursing other children...; but each time the wording is different as well as the punishment. (Haug and West 1971[1872]:lxix)

eating corpses and killing beavers (98); disobedience to rulers and hostility to army (99).

³⁷⁾ Tardieu (1985:23–24) regards this strategy as a legacy of Greek traditions.

³⁸⁾ According to Zoroastrian Pahlavi texts, man is composed of various mental (spiritual/conceptual) faculties, among them the soul (*ruwān*). The death of a person entails that the soul (together with other mental faculties) is separated from the body (*tan*). Being a mental faculty, the soul is linked to a body (and the separation from it causes terror to the soul), but the soul as such does not have a bodily shape. In the narrative (as told by the *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*) about the pain inflicted upon the souls by the demons, however, the souls are presented in bodily shape, and the pains can only be effectuated on the bodies of the soul. In cognitive approaches to the study of religions, these inconsistent ways of defining/imagining the ontology and actions of agents is referred to as theological incorrectness (see Barrett 1999; Slone 2004).

³⁹⁾ The *Dēnkard* witnesses another strategy, when it states that the contract-breakers are assigned to “the bottom of hell” (Dk. IX 20), where the souls are not punished physically but are placed in a particularly uncomfortable section of hell. (Reference kindly provided by Yuhān Vevaina.)

Haug and West are content with stating these facts, without attempting an explanation. The Iranian independent scholar Bijan Gheiby has recently come up with an ingenious explanation for the apparent chaos. He finds that “any attempt at introducing order and arrangement into hell seems superfluous” because Ahreman’s creation is defined as fundamentally chaotic, “not planned or methodically constructed” (2004:96). Unfortunately, however, this principle is never mentioned in the list of common attributes of hell. It also is in contradiction with the limits set by Ašwahišt on the punishments inflicted by the demons, implying, as pointed out above, that even hell is ultimately under divine control. Rather than chaos, hell appears as a perverse order. Gheiby’s idea therefore remains somewhat speculative.

There may be other reasons (no less speculative, to be sure). To begin with, the reduplications may well have to do with the long redaction history of the text. Obviously, this hypothesis does not dissolve the question of inconsistency, but merely moves it up one level, as it were. Not the authors, but the redactors and editors were then to be blamed for the apparent disorder.

One may also wonder whether the description is unsystematic not because of the nature of hell, but because of the nature of communication and memory. If it were to proceed systematically, would the text then not lose elements of surprise, of criss-crossing expectations, of unexpected turns that help to sustain attention? It must be kept in mind that this book was apparently meant for popular consumption and not written to satisfy the needs of theologians.

Moreover, one may ask whether an arrangement that proceeded, say, from the most heinous sins to the most trifling (or vice versa), or which classified sins according to social relationships and ontological categories (sins towards relatives, business partners, men, nature, etc.), would correspond to the world of experience, where one has the opportunity to commit sins of various degrees all the time.

Last but not least, it was possibly the intention of the text to show that one has to pay attention to sins of all kinds and to encourage the formation of what one might call a total ethical *habitus*. The text may well witness a mentality that does not at all share the idea that one can disregard minor offences. Conquering Ahreman will not be possible unless each and every little sin is avoided.

10. *Hell in Miniatures*

The *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag* was probably the most successful Pahlavi book in terms of literary diffusion (witness the various translations of the work). Apart from textual transmission, the work was also translated into visual culture. In Mogul India, miniatures were painted that illustrated Persian or Gujarati translations of the *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*.⁴⁰ The scenes of hell were of course easy to visualize for the artists. In this way, the text also reached illiterate people. Dhanjibhai Nauroji, the first modern Zoroastrian convert to Christianity, who would later himself become a Christian missionary, tells the following episode in his autobiography *From Zoroaster to Christ*:

I saw a Parsi lady of my acquaintance reading a book, and asked her what it was she was reading. She told me it was Ardawirafnama. . . . It has several pictures, and the lady showed me one of them. A frightful one it was! A man was hanging in a tree, with his legs tied together, his feet upwards, and his head downwards. Serpents and scorpions were all over his body, and devils with tails were all around. I asked the lady what it meant, and she said it was a picture of the punishment which a man was receiving in hell, who had been a great sinner while on earth. I fled from her and became violently agitated in mind. Why had I been allowed to see that picture? (Nauroji 1909:24–25)

This report is part of a biographical reconstruction explaining his increasing dissatisfaction with Zoroastrianism in his youth — a typical feature of conversion narratives. As such, the episode is part of a narrative scheme that contrasts the barbaric character of his former religion with the paternal benevolence of his adopted one. Nevertheless, the episode vividly illustrates the power of these sorts of pictures in making a lasting emotional impression on memory. As such, these miniatures may have fulfilled an important function.

III. The Erosion of Hell in Contemporary Zoroastrianism?

The quote from Dhanjibhai Nauroji has brought us to the modern age. Restrictions of time and space do not allow us at this point to follow up

⁴⁰) For some specimens see Blochet 1899; Desai 1991; Gropp 1993 (some reproduced in Stausberg 2002a); Choksy 2002.

on the development of Zoroastrian conceptualizations of hell in Persian and Gujarati Zoroastrian literatures. Instead, we will now make a long jump of another millennium (from the date of the literary composition of most Pahlavi works) and conclude this article with some comments on the present age.

Some ten years ago, Philip Kreyenbroek conducted a study among the Zoroastrian (Parsi) community in India based on thirty in-depth-interviews of urban Zoroastrians from Mumbai belonging to different social milieus and religious groups (but overwhelmingly lay-people). One of his results was that compared to classical texts, hell had apparently ceased to preoccupy the minds of people: “none of our informants indicated that they were afraid of going to hell” (Kreyenbroek 2001:299). He links this finding to a general attitude averse to dualistic thinking, which is openly rejected by some.

From my reading of contemporary Zoroastrian theological literature, I am under the impression that hell is not a prominent topic in the contemporary literature written by Zoroastrians on their religion, although many duly mention it as part of their theological legacy. However, some modern theologians such as Dastur Bode or the neo-Zarathushtrian “convert” Ali Akbar Jafarey exhibit the tendency to interpret heaven and hell as subjective states rather than as objective places or as inner-worldly rather than as otherworldly domains (see Stausberg 2002b:139, 369).

Besides such qualitative data, John Hinnells has provided us with quantitative data from a survey conducted in Britain, Hong Kong, North America (USA and Canada), Australia, and Kenya in the period 1983–1987. The total numbers for belief in “heaven and hell” (thus not specifically hell!) varies from 31% (Canada) to 77% (Kenya). With the exception of Hong Kong (33%) and Sydney (38%) on the one extreme and Karachi (71%)⁴¹ on the other, most countries and cities were in the 45 to 54% range. The figures for “heaven and hell” are consistently and significantly lower than the figures for “belief in immortality of soul”; at the same time they score consistently higher than the figures for both “reincarnation” and “resurrection” (see Hinnells 1994:99). Due to the lack of previous documentation it is impossible to decide whether these

⁴¹) Hinnells (1994:66) advises that “[t]he figures for Karachi should be treated with caution,” since the questionnaire was part of a pilot study.

figures amount to evidence for continuity or decline of beliefs in hell, but the figures are certainly higher than one would have expected based on Kreyenbroek's statement (unless one believes in either a radical decline in the decade separating Hinnells' from Kreyenbroek's study or in India being totally exceptional with regard to the spread of these beliefs).

The survey data provided by Hinnells allow for some further comments.⁴² Thus, there are clear distinctions when one takes the countries of origin of the diaspora-Zoroastrians into account: only 30% of those already settled in the West and only 36% of those from an Iranian background affirmed a belief in heaven and hell, whereas the scores for people originating from India (48%), Pakistan (66%), and East Africa (54%) were much higher. Among those coming from India, significantly more Zoroastrians from Gujarat (60%) asserted belief in heaven and hell than people from Mumbai (46%).⁴³ Significantly more people married to Zoroastrians affirmed the belief (50%) than those married to non-Zoroastrians (41%).

In general, a higher number of those who had attended religious classes in childhood expressed such a belief (52%) than of those who had not (45%). These figures may mirror the effects of religious education, or co-vary with other factors. A higher number of those who read Zoroastrian (religious) literature (52%) expressed belief in heaven and hell than of those who did not read Zoroastrian literature (45%). A significant higher number of those who regularly attended a Zoroastrian Centre (i.e. a community infrastructure in the diaspora) affirmed this belief (52%) than of those who attended infrequently (33%). Higher education slightly correlated with lower scores (46% of those who had done postgraduate studies expressed this belief against 51% with lower degrees of education). Zoroastrians having a degree in sciences were less likely to affirm this belief than those who had degree in the arts (45% as against 54%). More business people (49%) asserted this belief than professionals (42%).

Among age groups, the belief was least asserted by people in their 20s (40%), while those in their 60s (57%) scored highest, but these figures

⁴² For all the figures quoted in the following see Hinnells 2005:758–83.

⁴³ These figures also correlate to the figures for the languages in which people read: Persian (35%), English (43%), Gujarati (57%); see Hinnells 2005:763.

should not be over-interpreted, given the scores for the adjoining age groups (under 20s: 46%; 70+: 49%). Types of families, however, did not yield significant differences (nuclear: 45%; extended: 49%; no family: 49%), nor did having children correlate (with children: 48%; no children: 46%). The belief was more pronounced among those who were widowed (55%) and less among those who were separated or divorced (41%) than among either singles or married people (48% each). In general, slightly more females than males seemed to believe in heaven and hell (51% against 45%).

These data show that the belief in heaven and hell is shared by around half of the worldwide Zoroastrian diaspora population, with some significant differences. The belief is affirmed particularly by women, people who have married Zoroastrians, business people, people with a degree in the arts, or relatively little education, by people from East Africa, Pakistan and India, especially from rural backgrounds, and by people who frequently visit a Zoroastrian Centre, read Zoroastrian literature and who attended religious classes in childhood. All these correlations say nothing about co-variation and causalities. To take just one example: does being married to a Zoroastrian make a person likely to hold this belief, or does one avoid marrying non-Zoroastrians because one is afraid of hell, or is this only a case of co-variation? Similarly: what is the causal significance, if any, of professional, educational, and geographical background? The clear distribution by country, however, makes it likely that hell plays a different role in the Zoroastrian discursive communities and world-views in different countries.

Given that the diaspora (contrary to India and partly also to Iran) does not have a full-time professional priesthood, Hinnells' figures do not cover the priesthood (even if the dataset may include some Zoroastrians who were trained as priests) and his demographic variables do not include information on possible priestly backgrounds. Kreyenbroek's later study explicitly focused on the urban laity. Since the priests are the backbone of the normative tradition as propagated in the sources discussed above — in fact all the Middle Persian texts referred to above were probably composed by priests — we need to look at the attitudes of contemporary Zoroastrian priests.

In 2006 and 2007 the present writer (assisted by Dr. Ramiyar Karanjia, Benaifer Wykes, and Meher Patel) conducted a comprehensive survey

of the contemporary Zoroastrian priesthood in Western India.⁴⁴ The main dataset of this survey were structured interviews with some 50 practicing full-time professional priests. As part of the interview we asked a series of questions on the priests' beliefs. One of the questions was whether they believed in heaven and hell. 42 priests answered this question, among whom 4 priests stated that they did *not* believe in heaven and hell. One of them (aged 51) said: "Everything is here only." Furthermore, one priest expressed an agnostic attitude, stating: "We find out when we go there." Nine priests affirmed their belief, but with the important qualification that heaven and hell were considered this-worldly phenomena,⁴⁵ some making a connection to the concept of *karma*. One priest (76)⁴⁶ regarded heaven and hell as constructions of the mind ("it can make heaven of hell and hell of heaven"). One priest (57), who held a degree in Avesta and Pahlavi, pointed to the *Ardā Wirāz Nāmāg*, which he described as an "allegorical" description of the other world,⁴⁷ while another priest, aged 63, referred to the bridge leading to the other world (from which the souls fall into hell) as "mythological." Thus, there are very few priests who explicitly reject a belief in heaven and hell, but there are several priests who add qualifying statements to a general affirmation of this belief. The great majority of priests, however, either simply replied in the affirmative or even asserted this belief in an emphatic manner.⁴⁸ Some also added brief statements.⁴⁹ And at least one priest (73) expressed the confidence that

⁴⁴ The priesthood in Iran has changed dramatically after World War II. The professional heritable full-time professional priesthood has in practice been abolished; see Stausberg 2004:110–13.

⁴⁵ Here are some responses: "Everything is here"; "Whatever is there you suffer here only"; "Yes, it is there but it is in this world only"; "It exists on this world only"; "If you have misbehaved and done something bad, later on in your life, you or your kids will have to suffer"; "...at times I feel that we get rewarded for our good and bad deeds in this lifetime only. So we have heaven and hell here only. But there must be something that is why we have rituals and ceremonies." The latter statement refers to the fact that the priests primarily perform rituals.

⁴⁶ The numbers in brackets refer to the age of the respondents.

⁴⁷ Some other respondents also referred to this text.

⁴⁸ "All of us go there"; Yes. I believe in it"; "I suppose so"; "I have heard about it so I believe in it"; "Certainly"; "Yes, definitely"; "Obviously it is there"; "Sure."

⁴⁹ "According to Ardaviraf-Nameh, when he leaves the earthly plane, to see what is there; heaven, hell and Hamestagan, where sin and good deeds are equal. When I am

the correct performance of rituals would bring the priests (and their clients) to heaven (“If we perform the rituals properly, we go to heaven”).⁵⁰ It therefore seems that the hypothetical erosion of conceptions of hell — if they ever were as wide-spread in the communities as the normative literature suggests — has so far not affected the priesthood, at least not in India, where those doubting the existence of hell are a minority.

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with Padshah Saheb [= the consecrated fire in the temple], I feel I am in heaven. So there is no question of hell. People say that this is hell. Now in this hell also I am getting heaven. So this hell is nullified” (a priest aged 35); “Heaven hell depends on your deed. Heaven is your good deeds and hell is your bad deed. There are seven dakhys [= spheres]. After death, you are assigned a plane and place depending on your actions” (a priest aged 44).

⁵⁰ See Stausberg, Forthcoming, for the priests’ views on their rituals, their efficacy, and the relation of these views to matters of professional ethics.

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The Buddhist Hell: An Early Instance of the Idea?

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Abstract

In spite of the modern idea that Buddhism is too rational a religion to have a conception of hell, the case is just the opposite. The Buddhists promoted this idea very early. This is not really surprising, since the idea of hell is closely connected with the concept of *kamma*, action, and its fruit or result. Every living being is what it is by the force of its actions in this or earlier lives: good actions entail rebirth in heaven or as a human, while bad actions have as their result rebirth as an animal, a ghost, or worst of all, in hell. In the Buddhist hell one is thus punished by the evil actions themselves, not by some sort of divine justice. Although life in hell is not eternal in Buddhism, it can still last for an enormous time span until the bad actions have been atoned for and one is reborn to a happier state of existence. Thus hell plays a great part in the Buddhist system of teachings, and it is a favourite topic in the monastic rules as well as in the narrative literature of the *Jātakas*, the subject of which is the Buddha's earlier lives. Hell is discussed as a topic already in the *Kathāvatthu*, the first scholarly treatise of Buddhism with a named author, datable between 250 and 100 BC. The discussion in the *Kathāvatthu* represents what may be seen as a fully developed conception of hell, and thus the Buddhist hell as described by its earliest canonical literature predates the appearance of the idea in most, if not all other religious traditions.

Keywords

Buddhist hell, Buddhist ethics, Buddhist monastic rules, the early Buddhist canon, Jātaka literature, Buddhist cosmology

According to Max Weber, the Buddhist theodicy contained the most rational formulation of why men suffer, or are what they are. He called it “the formally most perfect solution of the theodicy problem.”¹ The

¹) “Die formal vollkommenste Lösung des Problems der Theodizee ist die spezifische

doctrine of *kamma* — that every living being has to reap the fruits of his own actions, whether in this life or in one of the innumerable lives that all beings have lived through successive reincarnations since time immemorial — says that every human being is what he is because of his past actions: “A living being is what he is by the force of his own deeds, my brahman friend, beings are heirs to their deeds. Thus deeds are their womb, deeds are kin, deeds are the only thing they can rest upon. Deeds divide being into lowness and excellence.”² Every god (*deva*), human being (*manussa*), animal (*tiracchāna*), restless ghost (*peta*) or habitant of hell (*niraya*, *naraka*) has been born in exactly that state because of his or her earlier actions, and not because they are punished or rewarded by a god or divine being. Any living being is totally responsible for his own fate, or rather state, since we are all the result of what we ourselves have done, and these worlds continue to exist because the beings in them continue to act.³

Leistung der indischen ‘Karma’-Lehre, des sog. Seelenwanderungsglaubens. . . . Der Einzelne schafft sich seinen eigenen Schicksal im strengsten Sinne ausschließlich selbst. Der Seelenwanderungsglaube knüpft an sehr geläufige animistische Vorstellungen von dem Übergang der Totengeister in Naturobjekte an. Er rationalisiert sie und damit den Kosmos unter rein ethischen Prinzipien. Die naturalistische ‘Kausalität’ unser Denkgewohnheiten wird also ersetzt durch einen universellen Vergeltungsmechanismus, bei dem kein *ethische* relevante Tat jemals verloren geht. . . . Diese Konsequenz der Seelenwanderungslehre hat in vollem Sinne nur der Buddhismus gezogen. . . .” (Weber 2001:299–301 [“Das Problem der Theodizee”]; cf. also *ibid.* 438: “Auch diese Ethik ist ‘rational’ im Sinn einer stetigen wachen Beherrschung aller natürlichen Triebhaftigkeit, aber mit gänzlich anderem Ziel,” where Weber is writing on Tibetan, Chinese and Japanese *Volksreligiosität*).

² This is the classical formulation of the Buddhist theodicy: *kammasakkā māṇava, sattā kammadāyādā kammayoni kammabandhu kammaṇṇisaṇṇā. kammā satte vibhajati yadidā hīnapaṇṇitātāyāti*, is found in MN III.4.5, *Cūḷakammavibhaṅga*, p. 204; cf. also AN IV.2.1.7: *kammassakombhi kammadāyādo kammayoni kammabandhu kammaṇṇisaṇṇo yā kammā karissāmi kalyāṇā vā pāpakā vā tassa dāyādo bhavissāmiṭi abhiṇhā paccacekkhitabbā itthiyā vā purisena vā gahattṭhena vā pabbajitena vā*, “... whatever deed I do, whether good or bad, I shall become heir of it! This ought to be contemplated by woman or man, layman or monk.” See further references in AN tr. III.59, note 3 and *passim*. On the endlessness of the cycle of birth and death, cf. SN III.2.4–10 and *passim*: *anamataggoyā bhikkhave, saṃsāro, pubbā koṭi na paññāyati*, “Saṃsāra is impossible to imagine, it is not possible to form a concept of its beginning.” Cf. also Nidd II.10 where the numbers are even much higher.

³ *yathā yathāyaṃ puriso kammaṃ karoti tathā tathā taṃ paṭisaṃvedissati*, A.1.249, “In

Thus, the above list of states of existence (*gati*) corresponds to five worlds, where beings are reborn as the result of what they did during their innumerable earlier lives: bad deeds make you an animal or a hungry ghost, but a really bad deed brings you to hell — these three states are called bad states (*duggati*). Good actions, on the other hand, lead to rebirth as a human or a god, which are good states (*sugati*). Birth as a god, though, does not preclude a later birth in hell, since when the good deeds are consumed in the pleasurable existence in heaven, one may easily fall into hell, or be reborn as an animal or a ghost, because earlier *karma* by its latent force creates rebirth in these states, conditioned as they are by past deeds of evil, or lust (*rāga*, *lobha*), ill-will (*dosa*) and bewilderment (*moha*). Being reborn as human, though, is in general seen as a very good rebirth,⁴ because in this state the Bodhisatta is born, to be fully awakened as a Buddha, who can teach the end of all the suffering entailed by the unending cycle of rebirth, the end of which is *nibbāna*, cessation of action, *kammanirodha* or *kammakkhaya*. In the human state one is able — that is, if one hears the teachings of the Buddha — to realize, through insight and meditation, that everything is impermanent and selfless, empty and brings only suffering; then, one does not seek rebirth again neither as humans, gods, or for that sake as animals or in hell, because having given up attachment to a self, and thus any attachment to life in the five states of existence, in *saṃsāra*, one will reach final extinction in *nibbāna*.

Thus, in Buddhist rationality, hells of many types, or, for that matter, heavens of various sorts, are an integral part of, and organically connected to, the doctrine of *karma* and reincarnation. The ideas and images of hell are also recurrent parts of Buddhism as it unfolds historically and geographically throughout the whole of East Asia in its more than two thousand years of history. It is thus interesting to note that Buddhism has at times in modern Western societies been preferred over Christianity as a particularly rational religion because, among

whichever way this man does a deed, in the same way he will experience it.” *kammanā vattati loko kammanā vattati pajā, kammanibandhanā sattā rathassāṇiva yāyato*, Sn 625, “By actions the world goes round, by actions all created beings go around [in the round of rebirth], beings are fastened to their actions as the wheel is to its axle as it revolves.”

⁴) And hard to attain, see below, p. 270 and n.26, and p. 272.

other things, it is perceived as not believing in such Christian irrationalities as an eternal hell. But our sources for the idea of hell in Buddhism are very rich, and they also seem to be anterior to the development of this idea in Christianity. One of the main differences between the Christian and the Buddhist hell is that the first is eternal, while the second is not — Buddhism teaches that everything is impermanent. Even so, rebirth in a Buddhist hell may last for prolonged periods.⁵ It is likely that this is why many of the early translators of the Buddhist Canon have preferred using the term “Purgatory” rather than “hell.” What is similar in the two traditions, however, is that stories about hell are very popular and in different ways illustrate the doctrines of the two traditions with very powerful images. Hell is, therefore, an ever-recurrent motif in the Buddhist tradition, as in the Christian, and forms part of edifying story-telling for the sake of the religious education of the lay community.⁶

⁵ “By the ripening of that deed, for many years, for many a hundred, for many a thousand, many a hundred thousand years he suffered [or: is cooked] in Purgatory [or: hell] . . .,” stock phrase *passim* in KN, MN, SN and Vin: *so tassa kammassa vipākena bahūni vassāni bahūni vassasatani bahūni vassasahassāni bahūni vassasatasahassāni niraye paccittha*, etc. The numbers are not consistent or accurate, but only express a very long duration: Kokālika (see below) is born in the Lotus Hell, indeed for long: “Long, monk, is the term of life in the Lotus hell. It is not easy to reckon it by so many years, so many thousands of years, and by so many hundreds of thousands of years.’ ‘Is it possible to give a simile, sir?’ ‘It is possible, monk,’ he replied. ‘Suppose there were twenty Kosalan cartloads of sesamum seed and at the end of every hundred years a man were to take out a seed, just one; well, sooner, monk, would those Kosalan cartloads of sesamum seed be used up and exhausted in that way — and that’s not one Abbuda hell! Monk, as twenty Abbuda hells are one Nirabbuda hell, as twenty Nirabbuda hells one Ababa hell, as twenty Ababa hells one Ahaha hell, as twenty Ahaha hells one Aṭṭa hell, as twenty Aṭṭa hells one Kumuda hell, as twenty Kumuda hells one Sogandhika hell, as twenty Sogandhika hells one Uppalaka hell, as twenty Uppalaka hells one Puṇḍarika hell, as twenty Puṇḍarika hells one Paduma (Lotus) hell. Verily, monk, the monk Kokālika was born in that hell because of the illwill he bore towards Sāriputta and Moggallāna.” In contrast to the eight hells mentioned below, which are warm, these are the cold hells, as implied by the sounds of freezing contained in the names of the first five. On the cold hells in general see Feer 1892:211 ff. It is not attested explicitly in the earliest texts that they are *cold*, this is said only in later commentaries, cf. *ibid.* 220 ff. The rest of the names are related to variants of lotus flowers. SN I.6.1.1 ff.: *Kokālivagga*, quotation from SN I.152, also in AN 174.

⁶ On Indian and Buddhist cosmology in general, including the systems of *kalpas*,

And indeed story-telling has been crucial to the propagation of Buddhist doctrines. The *tipiṭaka*, “the three baskets,” as the canonical scriptures of the Buddhists are called, consist traditionally of the *sutta* section, *viz.*, the speeches of the Buddha, the *vinaya*, the rules regarding monastic life, and the *abhidhamma* section, which is a systematic exposé of Buddhist psychology and the philosophy of the *dhamma*, the teachings of the Buddha. The written versions of these scriptures, many of which are extant today, underwent constant transformation throughout history with different sects reinterpreting the “true words of the teacher.”

Now, ideas on the infernal regions of the universe were of course found in India before Buddhism, and the king of the netherworld, Yama, ruled over the deceased, who could enjoy their afterlife if they were offered enough sacrifice from their living descendants — indeed the ideas of *karma* and retribution originated from this sacrificial cult. Originally *karma* denoted mainly the sacrifice, and its result was not computed so much in terms of abstract ethics as in terms of material compensation — the dead would have resources to live on after death only to the extent that their progeny and kin could perform sacrifices on their behalf. As Buddhist and Jaina ascetics brought in with them the idea of ethical conduct, the infernal regions, or, for that matter, other regions of the cosmos, changed into places of reward or retribution for those engaged in moral or immoral conduct. In the same process, Yama underwent a transformation from being the king of the forefathers to become the ruler of hell. This offers us an example of the transformed netherworld with a richness of imagery to describe the various punitive states of hell.⁷ The process of transformation from the world of deceased forefathers to a “fully developed hell” — as a cosmic

yugas and hells, see the still authoritative work of Kirfel 1920, further McGovern 1923 and Kloetzli 1983. For later Buddhist views on hell see Lamotte 1949:955 ff. with notes. It should be pointed out that the numbers used to describe distance and time in the Buddhist sūtras and commentaries are fanciful numbers used only to describe rhetorically very long duration, and not to be taken as accurate numbers. On the motives of Buddhist narrative *motifs* in general, see Grey 2000, with updated bibliography.

⁷ On Yama as the king of hell in general Indian tradition see Kirfel 1920:147–73, and 198–206 for list of the names and duration of punishments also from later sources in Buddhism. For Jaina hells see *ibid.* 315–29.

region which has as its purpose the punishment of sinners — has its parallels in the Mediterranean regions, and even in Iran.

The word for hell in early Buddhism is *niraya*. The etymology is not quite clear; *nir-i-* means to “go out,” or to “go asunder” — the last etymology is usually preferred to explain hell as a place where beings are destroyed, or their bad actions are destroyed.⁸ A *nerayika* is an inhabitant of hell. Less used in early tradition is *naraka*, another name for hell frequent in later literature.

If we address the question of hells in Buddhism from the perspective of origins, and ask when the idea of hell took root in Buddhism, we encounter some difficulties of dating, since the dates of Buddhist texts are very often uncertain, and scholarly opinions on the question to some extent diverge. The question is further complicated because Buddhist teachings, not yet written texts, were transmitted orally probably up to about 100 BC, at which time they were written down in Ceylon.⁹ There is, however, scholarly agreement on the whole that the Pāli canon is fairly formalized from this time, and thus a reliable source for early Buddhism.

Thus, it would be fairly safe, from the perspective of dating the ideas of the Buddhist hell, to start our investigation with the *Kathāvatthu*, which is the earliest Buddhist scripture with a named author, and which also is the first scripture to be dated by the Buddhist tradition itself.¹⁰

⁸ There are also indigenous etymologies from the Buddhist commentaries, for the ones in the Pāli tradition, see PTSD s.v.

⁹ On the earliest date of the written codification of the Buddhist canon, see von Hinüber 1996:88 with references; Norman 1983:10–11. By very recent discoveries of Buddhist manuscripts in Afghanistan and Pakistan edited in projects led by Harry Falk and Richard Salomon, Buddhist literature, even Mahāyāna, written in Kharoṣṭhī characters, has been dated well before the Common Era.

¹⁰ Thus, the Pāli tradition (*Atthasālinī* 4.25) asserts that the Kv was composed by the Elder Mogalliputtatissa 218 years after Nirvāṇa, which places it during the reign of emperor Aśoka (273–232 bc.). There is considerable disagreement on the date of the Buddha in the last two decades of research on Buddhism, but most scholars now believe the date of the Buddha to be later than was earlier thought. Thus, while the number 18 of the “218 years” may be correct, and indicate that the council, on which Kv is a “report,” was held some years after the beginning of Aśoka’s reign, “200 years” may seem to indicate only “a long period.” On the problem of dating early Buddhist history, see Bechert 1991–97. Later Pāli commentaries ascribe the various viewpoints discussed in the council also to the traditional sects of Buddhism, which must be later

The *Kathāvatthu* discusses various points of disagreement within the clergy, and, in this context, it depicts a council in the middle of the 3rd century BC, where one of the topics discussed is hell. Going by this date, we can, with some caution, date the earliest conceptions of hell in this period too. However, since the concept of hell was part of a fairly complex discussion, there is good reason to believe that the basic ideas on this issue were somewhat older than the discussion that took place at that date. At any rate, these ideas are an integral part of the doctrines discussed by the *Kathāvatthu*.

The first and second discussions in the *Kathāvatthu* of hell (I.1.161, 210–11), or Purgatory, as the translator wants it, refer, first, to the question of *karma* and, then, to the personality, *puggala*, the questions being whether it is the same personality or a different one that is reborn. The orthodox view seems to be that it is a different personality, since the stream of conscious states is constantly changing — into a *yakkha*, a semi-divine being, a *peta*, hungry ghost, an animal, or an inhabitant of hell, *nerayika*. At any rate, *karma*, actions, clearly is the force that drives a sentient being from state to state in the system of worlds. Later, there is a discussion as to whether the action *itself* is hell, or whether rebirth in hell is the *result* of a particular bad action, like murder. This is of course a theme much developed upon in later Buddhist philosophical traditions, which tend to see the world as a projection of the collective mental states of living beings. The position of the orthodox in the following quotation from *Kathāvatthu* (VII.10.4) seems to be that hell is indeed a state to be experienced in another life as the result of action:

than the *Kathāvatthu*. According to the northern sources of Mahāyāna Buddhism (Tibetan, Chinese), the first schism between the Mahāsāṃghika and the Theravāda (Pāli, Sanskrit: Sthāviravāda) took place during Aśoka's reign, and many of the disagreements described in the Kv are in accordance with the disagreements leading to this schism as described in the northern sources. The main topics of the Kv are the status of the self, and how perfect is the *arhat*, the Buddhist Saint, though many other points of controversy are referred to as well. The Kv refers to canonical statements, and if these are not to be considered later interpolations, they show that a Buddhist canon was in existence at that time, though most probably only in oral form. So with some scepticism we should have a source on Buddhist hells, thought of as places of retribution for bad deeds, dating from the middle of the 3rd century BC. On the *Kathāvatthu*, see Norman 1983:103–5, and *passim*, index s.v.; and von Hinüber 1996:70–73, and *passim*.

“Again, do you mean that a given bad mental state is its own result, a given good state its own result? That the consciousness with which we take life is the very consciousness with which we burn in Purgatory? That the consciousness with which we give a gift of merit is the very consciousness with which we rejoice in Heaven?” This heretical view was that of the sect of the Andhakas, according to the commentaries. We see that speculation on both Heaven and hell is clearly connected with the retribution for bad and compensation for good actions.

The next chapter of the *Kathāvatthu* starts out with a discussion as to whether there are five or six worlds. The commentaries state that the sects of the Andhakas and the Uttarāpathakas held that the Asuras also had a world of their own — the Asuras being the Vedic Asuras, warlike gods, something like the Titans or Giants of Greek mythology — in addition to the five subscribed to by the orthodox Theravādins, as mentioned above, hell being one of them.¹¹ An essential part of the discussions of the *Kathāvatthu* concerned the ideals of sainthood and religious perfection, and, thus, there was a discussion about whether a person with correct views on selflessness, etc., could commit bad deeds, even the five deadly sins — sins “having no intermediate” (*ānantarika*), that is, no intermediate state between the deed and rebirth in hell. These are: 1) matricide, 2) patricide, 3) killing a perfected saint (*arahant*), 4) wounding the Tathāgata, the Buddha, with evil intent, and 5) creating schism in the *sangha*, the Buddhist order of monks. These sins, according to the orthodox view, could not be committed by a person with a firm understanding of the true doctrine. Others, however, held the opposite view.¹² The prolonged periods of suffering, such as for an “aeon,” *kappa*, were also addressed, with reference to the canon: “One

¹¹) Kv VIII.1.1: Controversial point. — That there are six spheres of destiny. Did not the Exalted One name five destinies — purgatory, the animal kingdom, the Peta-realm, mankind, the devas? *cha gatiyo ti? āmantā. nanu pañca gatiyo vuttā bhagavatā, nirayo, tiracchānāyoni, pettivisayo, manussā, devā, no vata re vattabe “cha gatiyo ti.”* The argument goes on, *pro et contra*, though in later tradition, at least, the Asuras were usually counted as a sixth world, even though somewhat contiguous with the Devas. The question was not controversial in later tradition.

¹²) Kv VII.7; Vinaya iii.303 is quoted as support for the orthodox view; thus those “inside” the faith were safe to reach salvation, a view, of course, which may have served to protect orthodoxy.

who breaks up the concord of the order is tormented in purgatory for a *kappa*.”¹³ Even unintentionally committing any of the *ānantarika* incurs the most terrible suffering in hell. The last is a controversial point in the *Kathāvatthu*, and though opposed by several sects, it is still believed by the orthodox, notwithstanding the principle stated in many places in Buddhist philosophy, that action is mainly intention (Kv XX.1).

Two further problems concerning hell are discussed in the *Kathāvatthu*, problems also intimately connected with other Buddhist doctrines: namely, whether hell has guards that torture the inmates of hell (XX.3), and whether the Bodhisatta, or the Buddha to be, can be reborn in the bad and lower states of existence (*apāya*, *duggati* or *vinipāta*), that is, undergo hell, or being born as a ghost or an animal (XXIII.3).

The first problem is connected to the one mentioned above, whether one, as it were, *is* in hell when committing the evil deed, that the consciousness of the act is the same as the suffering. This is a view, the commentaries say, held e.g. by the Andhakas (again!), who suppose that there are no guards in hell charged with torturing and punishing; rather, these torturers are nothing but the bad actions themselves, committed in the “shape of hell-keepers who purge the sufferers.” The orthodox protested, and did so with canonical quotations:¹⁴

Him, bhikkhus, Hell’s guards torture with fivefold punishment; they trust a hot iron stake through one hand, then another through the other hand, then one through the foot, then another through the other foot; they thrust a hot iron stake through the middle of the chest. And he thereupon feels painful, piercing, intolerable suffering, nor does he die till that evil deed of his is cancelled.

Him, bhikkhus, Hell’s guards make to lie down and flay him with hatchets... they place him head downwards and flay him with knives... they bind him to a chariot and drive him to and fro over burning, blazing glowing ground... they lift him up on to a great hill of burning, blazing, white hot coals and roll him down a fiery slope... they double him up and cast him into a hot brazen jar, burning glowing where he boils, coming up like a bubble of foam, then sinking, going now to this side, now to that. There he suffers fierce and bitter pain, nor does he die till that evil karma is cancelled. Him Bhikkhus, they cast into the Great Purgatory.

In districts measured out four-square four-doored,
Iron the ramparts bounding it, with iron roofed,

¹³ *Itivutaka*, §§13 and 18: *Saṅghā samaggā bhettvāna kappaṃ nirayamhi paccatīti*.

¹⁴ *Majjhima* iii.166–67, 182–83; *Anguttaranikaya* 1.41, translation from Kv tr. p. 346–47.

Iron its soil welded by fiery heat,
Spreading a hundred leagues it stands for aye.

With this display of canonical and orthodox rhetoric the article ends, leaving no doubt that the orthodox view is that hell is real. Moreover, it is a hell of the type we may call fully developed, where moral frailty and bad deeds are punished: “Hence there surely are guards in purgatory.”

The views of the Andhakas, however, who were heirs to the Mahāsāṃghika, point in the direction of the relativist and mentalist views of later Mahāyāna literature. This is also the case with another Andhaka view, this time about the Bodhisatta: though he is a perfected being, he can still, by his own will, seek rebirth in the *vinipāta*, a lower state of existence. The idea of Mahāyāna Buddhism is that the Bodhisatta (or Bodhisatva in Buddhist Sanskrit — in modern works often Bodhisattva), should by expedient means (*upāya*) seek rebirth where there is most suffering, so that he can consume more quickly his bad *karma* from earlier lives, and thus speed up his development of good action and wisdom in order to attain complete awakening as a Buddha. The orthodox view in the *Kathāvatthu* objects to that kind of rebirth for the Bodhisatta, as he is seen as a superior moral being who cannot, by the force of his own good action, be reborn in such low states of existence as hell, as a spirit or as an animal. In the Mahāyāna, however, the Bodhisatva is reborn in the lower states not because of his attachment to these states, but because of his compassion and his promise to save all living beings. This cosmic mobility of the Bodhisatta is a key point in the later discussions between the Mahāyāna and the Thera/Sthāvira positions, discussions, though, that have mostly been initiated by the Mahāyāna side. But we find disagreement on this issue already in the *Kathāvatthu*:

[Controversial Point:] That a Bodhisatta goes to an evil doom, enters a womb, performs hard tasks, works penance under alien teachers of his own accord and free will.

[Question from the orthodox position, implying that the opponent is wrong:] Do you mean that he so went and endured purgatory, The Sañjīva, Kālasutta, Tāpana, Patāpana, Sanghātaka, Roruva, and Avīci hells? Can you quote me a Sutta to support this? . . . (Kv XXIII.3)¹⁵

¹⁵ The paragraph goes on to discuss the other related questions. The Mahāyāna view is found in a number of *sūtras* and commentaries, and is summarized e.g. by the

In this paragraph we also note that the eight departments of hell are already in place at the early date of the *Kathāvatthu*, a fact that underscores that a very developed and systematic view of hell existed in this period. The names of the hells, however, vary to some extent in the literature, but the eight hells constitute a basic list.¹⁶ Generally, the names of the various hells denote suffering and torture, expressive of the torture going on there when *kamma* is “matured” or, literally, “boiled” (Pāli: *paccati*) — implying on the one hand that the sufferer is purified of his bad deeds, but also playing on the word to indicate that boiling is part of the torture.

From what we, with some argumentative force, may call a very early source of Hell in Buddhism, we will go on to treat other sources. There is no doubt that Buddhist literature has developed through repeated processes of canonization, but, as mentioned above, there is some scholarly agreement that the Pāli canon was fixed about 100 BC. However, the *suttas* and the *vinaya* fixed in writing definitely build on earlier oral tradition, and, as we have seen, the *Kathāvatthu* also quotes earlier

Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra (XIII.14–15): “Indeed, great pain suffered during a sojourn in Hell is never an obstacle to the sons of the Victorious, as it is suffered for the sake of [all] beings. But all kinds of thought-constructions in the inferior way (*hinayāna*) concerned with purity — arising from [reflections on] the good qualities of peace and the bad qualities of existence — are an obstacle to the intelligent. Indeed a sojourn in hell is never a hindrance to the intelligent in attaining the undefiled and extensive awakening. But the thought-constructions consisting in the absolute coldness of one’s own good only, which are found in the other way, make hindrances to staying in the absolute joy.” The Mahāyāna criticized the *śrāvakayāna*, or *hinayāna* — which our Pāli literature on the whole may be said to represent, being the literature of the Theravāda — for their selfish seeking of their *own* salvation. The Bodhisatta’s rebirth in hell is, however, still found in the Pāli *Jātakas*. In Ja no. 538 the Bodhisatta is described as a king in Benares, then he stays eighty thousand years in the Ussada hell, after which he is reborn as a god in Indra’s heaven, where Indra asks him to take rebirth again as a human. The Ussada hell is “twice eight times more in number, a kind of minor hell” (Ja V.137). In general there is also talk of the Great Hell, and the sixteen lesser hells (e.g. Ja no. 142); other numbers in Cowell 1895–1913:index, s.v. Hell.

¹⁶ Seven of them are mentioned in Kv: *sañjīva*: “reviving,” implying that suffering has no end because one does not “die” in hell; *kālasutta*: “thread of time,” probably also to express how suffering goes on continuously; *tāpāna*: “suffering”; *patāpāna*: “excessive suffering”; *sanghātaka*: “crushing”, “beating”; *roruva*: “roaring”, and *avīci*: (suffering with) “no intermission,” evidently hot hells. The *mahārōruvaniraya* “hell of great roaring” is not mentioned in the Kv list, but is usually included to make up a list of eight hells.

canonical works, which may thus be surmised to be older than the *Kathāvatthu*. If we use the argument of the written canon as a *terminus a quo*, this would bring the Buddhist ideas of a developed hell back more than a century BC, and the concept of hell also suffuses the canonical scriptures of Buddhism. Our next area of investigation would then, naturally, be the monastic *ordo*, the *vinaya*, and the speeches of the Buddha, the *suttas*.

Now, the *vinaya* is naturally most concerned with punishing people, or rather the monks and nuns, in *this* life rather than the afterlife. The reactions of the Buddhist monastic order to wrongdoings were of eight sorts. The most serious was expulsion from the order, the *pārājika* offences. Second are those wrongdoings punished by suspension (*saṅghādisesa*), and then there are six types of offences atoned for by expiation and confession, and no further punishment. However, the *pārājika* offences may also entail rebirth in hell, and the first offence mentioned is sexual conduct of any sort — for this, if it is intentional, the monk or nun is expelled from the *saṅgha*. Not having sexual relations is closely connected with the very identity of monastic life, not only in Buddhism, and is thus punished very hard, through exclusion or excommunication; it is the *pārājika* offence first mentioned in the Pāli *Vinaya*. All the rules are illustrated by long narratives throughout the *Vinaya*. The main story illustrating what is considered to be a sexual offence is the story of the monk Sudinna, who was seduced by his former wife, because her family wanted an heir to their properties. In the end Sudinna gave in, and he was scolded by the Buddha:

It is not fit, foolish man, it is not becoming, it is not proper, it is unworthy of a recluse, it is not lawful, it ought not to be done. . . . It were better for you, foolish man, that your male organ should enter the mouth of a black snake than it should enter a woman. It were better for you, foolish man, that your male organ should enter the mouth of a charcoal pit, ablaze afire, than it should enter a woman. For *that* reason, foolish man, you would go to death, or to suffering like unto death, but not on that account would you pass at the breaking up of the body after death to the waste, the bad bourn, abyss, hell. But for *this* reason, foolish man, at the breaking up of the body after death you would pass to the waste, the bad bourn, abyss, hell. (Vin. Su. P. I.5.11)¹⁷

¹⁷⁾ ...na tv eva tappaccayā kāyassa bhedā parammaraṇā apāyā duggatim vinipātā nirayā upapajjeyya. ito nidānaṃ ca kho moghapurisa kāyassa bhedā parammaraṇā apāyā duggatim vinipātā nirayā upapajjeyya. (We write *Vinaya* with a capital when referring to

Sexual offences were evidently not forgiven, even if they were unconscious or unwilling, as some of the other stories illustrate. Real sexual offences would lead not only to exclusion from the order, however, but at death to lower existences and hell. There is no lack of creativity, though, in the description of the various sorts of sexual offences in the *Vinaya*.

The first of the four *pārājikas*, then, is sexual offence (*methuna-dhamma*), which is also punished in hell. The other three *pārājikas* of stealing, or, “appropriating what is not given” (*adinnādāna*), killing of human beings (*jīvitā voropana*), and the claiming of magical abilities (*uttarimanussadhamma*), be they true or not, were not as such connected to additional punishment in hell by their interpretative narratives in the *Vinaya*. There is, however, a story (Vin. Su. P. IV.1.2) that those claiming supernatural powers for the sake of extracting alms from the laity end up in hell. And in general all the sins subsumed under the category of *parājika* would lead to hell.

The fifth *ānantarika* sin, causing schism in the monastic order (*saṅghabheda*), is not mentioned as a break of a *pārājika* rule, entailing automatic expulsion, but as entailing *suspension* for a period to be decided by the *saṅgha* (*saṅghādiṣeṣa*).¹⁸ This is illustrated by the narrative about the Buddha’s cousin, Devadatta, who tried to usurp the leadership of the *saṅgha* from the Buddha. Devadatta wished to split the monastic community by proposing a more strict discipline, by which he aimed at attracting more disciples, e.g. the prohibition of fish and meat, which were allowed by the Buddha if the meat given to the monk came from animals killed without the monk’s knowledge, and some other measures stricter than those taught by the Buddha.¹⁹ This was

the texts of the *vinaya* rules.) The monks and nuns were expected to know all these rules, and every fortnight they were recited during the *uposatha* ceremony. If anybody had committed a sin, they should show it with a sign, and receive the allotted punishment. The *vinaya* of the nuns included eight *pārājika* rules, the additional ones not surprisingly connected with sexual misconduct; see *Bikkhunivibhaṅga* I.1–IV.2.

¹⁸ See von Hinüber 1996:10. Norman (1983:18) uses the older translation “formal meeting” for *saṅghādiṣeṣa*.

¹⁹ Five rules: “The brethren shall live all their life long in the forest, subsist solely on doles collected out of doors, dress solely in rags picked out of dust-heaps, dwell under trees and never under a roof, never eat fish or flesh.” *Cullavagga* VII.3.14.

reported to the Buddha, who asked whether it was true, and when it was confirmed, he made the rule that splitting the *saṅgha* with such views was an offence entailing suspension if the monk, after being admonished three times, did not give up his views. This would also, by the next rule, be the reaction against monks supporting the schismatic view (Vin. Su. S. X–XI).

However, Devadatta went further than only sowing disagreement in the monastic community, and his personality became emblematic of treason against the Lord, against Truth and Awakening itself (Vin. Cullavagga VII.2.1–4.8.): To usurp the leadership of the community — his motive is stated to be gain and honour — he even tried to kill the Lord with an aggressive elephant named Nālāgiri. But the Lord “suffused the elephant Nālāgiri with loving kindness of mind... Then the Lord, stroking the elephant Nālāgiri’s forehead with his right hand... Then the elephant Nālāgiri, having taken the dust off the Lord’s feet with his trunk, having scattered it over his head, moved back bowing while he gazed upon the Lord... ‘Some are tamed by stick, by goads and whips. The elephant was tamed by the great seer without a stick, without a weapon.’” But the end for Devadatta was incumbent on him. Two of the Lord’s main disciples, Sāriputta and Moggallāna, came to see Devadatta, who asked Sāriputta to entertain the defecting monks with a talk on the *dhamma*, since he himself was tired and his back was aching. Sāriputta convinced the 500 monks lead astray by Devadatta to return to the Lord, and when Kokālika, Devadatta’s main follower, woke him up, “at that very place hot blood issued from Devadatta’s mouth,” and he was reborn “in a bad state of existence, as an inhabitant of hell for an aeon, incurable” (*āpāyiko nerayiko kappatṭho atekiccho*). The Devadatta story in the *Vinaya* ends with a verse:

Never let anyone of evil desire arise in the world;
And know it by this: as the bourn of those evil desires.
Known as “sage,” held as “one who made the self become,”
Devadatta stood shining as with fame — I heard tell.
He, falling into recklessness, assailing the Truth-finder
Attained Avīci Hell, four-doored, frightful.

Thus we learn in the *Vinaya* that the sin of splitting the community of monks ended up in hell in Devadatta’s case, but, as we saw above, the

sin is one of expulsion decided by a formal meeting, and the *Vinaya* discusses in this perspective the difference between dissension (*saṅgharāji*) and schism (*saṅghabheda*), the second of course being the most heinous sin in that it attacks the very identity of the monastic order — and, therefore, the only appropriate punishment would be in hell, and the narrative on Devadatta illustrates this.

Kokālika, the main follower of Devadatta, died of ulcers all over his body and was reborn in the Lotus hell because he spoke ill about the Buddha's disciples Sāriputta and Moggallāna. His punishment is in accordance with his evil slandering:

In sooth to every person born
An axe is born within his mouth,
Wherewith the fool doth cut himself
Whereas he speaks evilly. (SN I,149)²⁰

Devadatta is described as the main culprit also in the *Suttas*, the speeches of the Buddha, as deserving the worst of punishment in the deepest of the hells, *Avīci*, for his *saṅghabheda*, but most of all for his thirst for gain, honour and praise (*lābhasakkārasiloko*) — the topic of the *Devadattasutta* in the *Aṅguttaranikāya*.²¹ But it is not the Buddha, of course, who punishes — one is punished by the force of one own actions — the Buddha is only forgiving and friendly, even when the elephant attacks him.

Niraya and the *duggati* are frequent themes in the *suttas* as places for gruesome punishments: we have already seen quotations in the *Kathāvatthu* above, and *The Stupid and the Wise*, and the following *The Messengers of the Gods*,²² are *suttas* in particular devoted to the subject. The Stupid is of course the sinner who is stupid enough to incur only suffering by sins in body, speech and mind — as the sins are ordered in Buddhism, similar to the Christian formula “thoughts, words and deeds.” The five basic sins out of which the whole morality of Buddhism is generated are all committed by the Stupid, the fool, who is “one who

²⁰) *purisassa hi jātassa kuṭhārī jāyate mukhe, yāya chindati attānaṃ bālo dubbhāsitaṃ bhaṇaṃ*. Cf. above, note 5, same verse in AN V.174.

²¹) IV.2.2.8, but cf. *Purisindriyañānasutta* (VI.2.1.8), and *Devadattavipattisutta* (VIII.1.1.7) mentioning also his hellish career, similar in SN V.4.2; VI.2.2; etc.

²²) *Bālapaṇḍitasutta* and *Devadhūtasutta*, MN. III.3.9–10.

made onslaught on creatures” (*pāṇātipātī*), “a taker of what had not been given” (*adinnādāyī*), “behaving wrongly in regard to sense-pleasures” (*kāmesu micchācārī*) — i.e. sexual misconduct, mainly — “aliar” (*musāvādī*), and “one given up to occasions for sloth consequent upon drinking arrack, toddy and strong liquor” (*surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhāyī*) — fairly close to what are regarded as sins by most cultures, religious or not, universally.²³ Such thieves and evildoers are punished in this world by kings ordering for them tortures, as our *sutta* says, citing the standard catalogue in Pāli literature of such punishments, excelling in the (un)aesthetics of gruesomeness: “flogging him with whips, with canes, with cudgels, cutting of his hand, his foot hand and foot, his ear, nose, ear and nose, torturing him with the gruel-pot, with the chank-shave,” and so on.²⁴ But, indeed, he also ends up in hell: “He, monks, who is a fool, having fared wrongly in thought, at the breaking up of the body after dying arises in the sorrowful ways, the bad bourn, the Downfall, Niraya hell.”²⁵ These sins are, of course, punished much harder in hell

²³) Sometimes the arrack and toddy is left out and there are only the four sins, as in the *Lesser and Greater Analysis of Deeds*, the *Cūḷakammavibhaṅgasutta* and the *Mahākammavibhaṅgasutta*, MN III.4.5–6. The five are mentioned *passim*. The committer of the third sin is often called *abrahmacārī*.

²⁴) The commentaries explain: gruel pot: they took off the top of the skull and, taking a red hot iron ball with pincers, dropped it into it so that the brains boiled over; chank-shave: sandpapering the scalp with gravel until it became smooth as a sea-shell; Rāhu’s moth: Rāhu the Asura swallowed the moon and caused its eclipse; they opened his mouth with a skewer, inserted oil and a wick and lit it; fire-garland: the body was smeared with oil and set alight; flaming hand: the hand was made into a torch with oil-rags and set alight; hay-twist: the skin was flayed from the neck downwards and twisted below the ankles into a band by which he was hung up; bark-dress: the skin was cut into strips and tied up into a sort of garment; the antelope: the victim was trussed up, spitted to the ground with an iron pin and roasted alive; flesh-hooking: he was flayed with double fish-hooks; disc-slice: little discs of flesh the size of a copper coin were cut off him; pickling process: the body was beaten all over with cudgels and the wounds rubbed with caustic solution by combs; circling the pin: the body was pinned to the ground through the ears and twirled round by the feet; straw mattress: the body was beaten till every bone was broken and it became limp as a mattress. See AN tr. p. 42–43 with notes and references. One is struck by the imaginary power of cruelty and the highly developed ancient science of torture.

²⁵) Standard phrase with few variations *passim* in the Pāli canon: *Sa kho so bhikkhave bālo kāyena duccharitā caritvā vācāya duccharitā caritvā manasā duccharitā caritvā kāyassa bheda parammaraṇā apāyā duggatim vinipātā nirayā upapajjati*.

than here in the human world, and the Lord can only describe them with similes: a thief is stabbed with a hundred spears in the morning, midday and in the evening by the king's orders, but if one compares the suffering of this man with a small stone, the sufferings of hell would be comparable to a Himalaya mountain of such stones. Then follows a vivid description of hell as quoted above from the *Kathāvatthu*, and also a depiction of the various animal existences the sinner may incur because of his bad deeds — the deeds themselves attract him to these states of existences, horses and cattle being among the better states, followed by dogs and jackals, etc., and in the end he may be born among beetles, maggots and insects, or, worst of all among the animals, rotting fish.

There is every reason to avoid the *duggattis*, as they are extremely hard to get out of: it is very difficult to again attain human birth — which of course is a great privilege, because you then may receive the teaching of the Buddha and be liberated from the horrors of *saṃsāra*. The simile given to illustrate this concept is that of a man who throws a yoke with a hole in it into the sea and it floats everywhere: it is more difficult for a being born in the lower states of existence to attain human birth than it is for a blind turtle coming to the surface of the ocean every hundred years to put its neck through the hole of the yoke.²⁶ The reason is that “there is no *dhamma*-faring there, no even-faring, no doing of what is skilled, no doing of what is good. Monks, there is devouring of one another there and feeding on the weak.” It is also difficult to practice good *kamma* there, which is necessary if the unfortunate being is to move upwards into better states of existence. Even if born as a human again, he would be born among the low, where it is also difficult to perform good deeds to improve one's karmic lot (MN III.169). So the advice is to act well with regard to our fellow beings and keep our morality clean. The wise man, of course, is the opposite of everything appertaining to the stupid: he will be born in the divine world, where the pleasures are as indescribable as the sufferings of hell.

The king of Niraya, hell, is Yama. In the *sutta* *The Messengers of the Gods*²⁷ the sinner is questioned by the king, being brought before him

²⁶) For the simile, cf. also SN I.5.7–8.

²⁷) MN III.3.10, abridged version in AN III.1.4.6.

by the guardians of hell: “This man, sire, had no respect for his mother, no respect for his father, he does not honour recluses, he does not honour brahmans, he does not pay due respect to the elders of the family. Let your majesty decree a punishment for him.”²⁸ King Yama then interviews him on whether he has not seen the messengers of the gods, the *Devadhūtas*, who are personifications, depicted in a very sombre way, of the five situations of suffering of existence: birth, old age, illness, a thief punished by whipping, then a rotting corpse. We recognize the concluding elements of the chain of dependent origin.²⁹ The situations are depicted in the *sutta* as divine messengers of the qualities of *samsāra*, nothing but impermanence and suffering. But the man before the king had not taken heed of these reminders, he still acted badly, and “King Yama, monks, having cross-questioned him, questioned him closely and having spoken to him concerning the fifth divine messenger, was silent.” An ominous silence, evidently, because then the guards drag the poor man off to his punishments. The favourite piece quoted in the *Kathāvatthu* concerning punishments (see above) is given. But the *Devadhūtasutta* has more details. The unfortunate is hurled around the Great Hell against the four gates, burned and tortured. And then:

Monks, there comes a time once in a very long while when the eastern gateway of this Great Niraya Hell is opened. He rushes there swiftly and speedily; while he is rushing swiftly and speedily his skin burns and his hide burns and his flesh burns and his tendons burn and his eyes are filled with smoke — such is his plight. And though *he has attained much*, the gateway is nevertheless closed against him. Thereat he feels feelings that are painful, sharp, severe. But he does not do his time until he makes an end of that evil deed.³⁰

²⁸) MN III.180: *nirayapālā nānābhāsu gahetvā yamassa rañño dassenti ’ayā deva, puriso amatteyyo apetteyyo asāmañño abrahmañño na kulejettāpacāyī, imassa devo daṇḍā paṇetuti.*

²⁹) The final elements of the *paṭiccasamuppāda*, the result of ignorance, *avijjā*, are birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation suffering, depression and despair: *jarāmaraṇasokaparidevadukkhadomanassa’ ūpayāsa*. The *devadhūtas* also correspond to the objects of meditation, as meditation on the impure creates disgust for existence and makes one seek the good, and ultimately *nibbāna*.

³⁰) The commentary on the *sutta*: “After saying that ‘he has attained much,’ that is, having attained many hundred thousand years in Avīci, [it says] that it takes him all this time to work off the ripening of his evil deed” (abbreviation of MA 4.235 as in MN III, tr. p. 227 n.5). The Buddhist “Judas” occupies, expectedly, the lowest and most terrible hell.

Not unexpectedly, he experiences the same at the other gates, but, in the end, the eastern gate is open for him, but only for him to be reborn in another hell: the Great Filth Hell, where his skin, flesh and bones are cut off. Then he is reborn the in Ember Hell, the Forest of Silk-Cotton Trees, which he has to climb — they are of course burning — and then the Hell of burning water. He is hungry, asking for food, and the guards haul him out with a fishhook and fill his mouth with glowing copper pellets that burn his chest and stomach before they pass out with his bowels and intestines. When daring to say he is thirsty, he gets a similar treatment.

The end of this text, though, shows that there is after all a way out of hell, and that even its ruler Yama is reborn in *inferno* because of his own actions: even he would like to be born as a human to hear the teachings of the Lord Buddha and thus be liberated from suffering. So Yama is not an eternal ruler of the Netherworld, he is in principle a living being transmigrating like any other, who, because of his actions, has become what he is, in accordance with the *kamma* principle, which is universal:

Once upon a time, monks, it occurred to King Yama: “Those that do evil deeds in the world are subjected to a variety of punishments like these. O that I might acquire human status and that a Tathāgata might arise in the world, a perfected one, a fully Self-Awakened One, and that I might wait on that Lord, and that that Lord might teach me *dhamma*, and that I might understand that Lord’s *dhamma*.” (MN III.187)

Thus, there is indeed mobility in the Buddhist universe, but at a fairly slow rate, given the particular understanding of time in classical India, where the age of the universe was not counted in millennia, as in ancient western traditions, but in *kappas*, aeons, time periods of enormous length³¹ — which length, however, varied according to

³¹ Cf. SN III.1.6: *Dīgho kho bhikkhu kappo. So na sukaro sākhātum ettakāni vassānīti vā, ettakāni vassasatāni iti vā, ettakāni vassasahassāni iti vā, ettakāni vassasatasahassāni iti vāti*. “A *kappa* is long. It is not easy to calculate how many years it is, how many hundreds of years it is, how many thousand of years it is, how many hundred thousands of years it is.” Later, and particularly in the Mahāyāna, the numbers of years in a *kalpa* tended to reach unthinkable and immeasurable figures. See also notes 2, 5 and 6.

various traditions. The *kappas* would also be eternally recurring. The Buddha would remember these *kappas*, because of his divine vision, and his advanced students would also remember some. But only the Buddha could recount *all* his previous births, and also all the births of others, and that is the rationale given in the *Jātakas*. Remembering one's former lives, and being able to relate to all the sins one has committed during the innumerable previous births, is the clue to get rid of their results and be freed from being reborn again in the *duggati*, and in the end to be liberated from *saṃsāra*.

In the *Dhammapada*, it seems, it is still mainly the monks, who are exhorted to perform good deeds and are threatened with hell, who are targets of the preaching, and the theme of monastic hypocrisy and corruption is emphasized — a frequent theme both in Buddhism and in other monastic traditions: “Who speaks untruth to purgatory goes; he too who says ‘I do not’; both these, in passing on, equal become, men of base actions in another world. Many about whose neck is a yellow robe, of evil qualities and uncontrolled, wicked by wicked deeds, in hell they're born.”³²

In the *Jātakas*, though, the layperson is more often part of the story, and it is in the *Jātrakas* that the exuberance of early Buddhist narratives unfolds fully — also concerning the subject of hell. The *Jātakas* are a vehicle of Buddhist preaching. They narrate how bad actions entail bad results, and the good the opposite, and that across the borders of death, as the fruits of *kamma* appear in many lives after the act was committed. Thus the *Jātaka* stories illustrate how the Buddha, being first a Bodhisatta, incarnated in all kinds of existences throughout his development before becoming a complete Buddha, cultivated his wisdom and compassion and his good actions. They also show how incidents in the Buddha's “present” life are connected to all the people he related to in his former lives, and thus the workings of *kamma* from life to life, and the connections between the *dramatis personae* throughout the chains of reincarnation, are brought into focus. Thus the *Jātakas* have a common formal structure: (1) story of the present (*paccupannavatthu*,

³²) DhP XXII, 306 ff., The Hell Chapter, *nirayavaggo* 1–2: *abhūtavādi nirayaṃ upeti yo cāpi katvā na karomīti cāha, ubho'pi te pecca samā bhavanti nihīnakammā manuḍā parattha. kāsāvakaṇṭhā bahavo pāpadhammā asaṇṇatā, pāpā pāpehi kammehi nirayaṃ te upapajjare.*

an incident from the life of the Buddha); (2) a past event (*atitavatthu*, giving the reason for the incident, by way of the *kamma* that would be the cause of it in lives past); (3) the connections (*samodhāna*) between the *dramatis personae* in the present with those in the past lives, their “identifications,” so to say (von Hinüber 1996:56). A mnemonic verse contains first the title, then the present, and then the past, and then the connections and the verse are expanded on through a commentary on each of the words in the verse, and we have a full story.

As the Buddha in the stories most often was reborn as a layman, the *Jātakas* were always important in lay Buddhism; thus, they are close to the Mahāyāna literature, which also underlines the lay ideals at the expense of monasticism, often described as corrupt and decadent. There are, however, few, if any, explicit Mahāyāna dogmas in the Pāli *Jātaka* collection that we are employing here to describe early Buddhist views on hell. Thus the *Jātakas* describe not only the Buddha’s previous lives, but also the moral ideals and ethical self-sacrifice he practiced in these earlier lives, as models for the Buddhists, and how he developed, by his behaviour, into the perfected man and laid down the path to be followed by others. Thus the ethics of the Buddha and his former incarnations are described, but also the other personalities he meets, and how *they* acted in former lives — good actions causing good rebirths, and bad ones causing rebirth as animals, spirits and not the least in hell, all according to the law of *kamma*. Thus the *Jātakas* became a source of entertainment as narratives, and were always an important instrument in the hands of the monks in their effort to educate the lay people with edifying storytelling. On the whole, the descriptions on hell in the *Jātakas* are the same as those given in the earlier *Vinaya* and *Sutta* literature. The earliest *Jātakas* are a formalized part of the Tipiṭaka, and were written down in verse for memorizing. The *Jātaka* collection of the *Khuddakanikāya* consists of such verses, which are the nuclei of the developed stories as we have them. The total number of *Jātakas* was originally 550 (von Hinüber 1996:54–58, Norman 1983:77–84). The verses are, as often in Buddhist literature, mnemonic, containing only a reference to the story, while the stories themselves were probably orally transmitted and written down at a later stage.³³

³³) Other (and later) *Vinayas* often integrated more of the *Jātakas* into the *Vinaya*

Our topic is of course important in the *Jātakas*, since many of the persons the Buddha meets throughout his career of rebirths are described as having had a stay in hell — as well as in the other states of existence — the cycle of rebirth being unending without the teachings of a Buddha.

For our survey of hell in the *Jātakas* we may start again with Devadatta, the main villain of the Buddhist drama and the foremost candidate for punishments in hell. He goes to the deepest hell, and his mode of dying is expanded upon compared to the earlier sources. He falls ill, and blood issues from his mouth, but he somehow repents and wishes to be reconciled with the Lord. But the Lord does not wish to see him, and Devadatta, lying on a litter, wishes to ease his pains with drink and a bath. He gets up, but before he can drink, fires flare up from the deepest hell, Avīci. The earth opens, and even though he takes refuge in the Buddha in that moment, he is swallowed by the earth, and with five hundred families of his followers he is reborn in the deepest hell.³⁴ Evidently, in early Buddhism, contrary, e.g., to Christianity, to express your faith in the last moment before death has no effect on your fate in the afterlife — the principle of *kamma* is merciless and impossible to change.³⁵ However, it still seems possible to avoid hell, if the Way of Truth is followed. King Ajātasattu, who had killed his father, king

itself, like that of the Sarvāstivāda, which is completely extant in Tibetan and partly in Sanskrit. A number of indices exist for the *Jātakas* e.g. Cowell 1895–1913, with its ample indices in vol. VI, as well as electronic editions. We are using Cowell's translations and references to them.

³⁴) The idea connected with it is that the earth is not able to carry the weight of such misdeeds — even though it can carry the weight of Mt. Sumeru. Devadatta also died in that way in former births (e.g. Ja no. 72, 358), and this is the mode of dying for very great sinners. A woman who tried to lie about a sexual relation with the Lord, to harm him so that rival ascetics would get more alms, dies in the same way: the earth opens, flames encompass her and she falls into Avīci. There was a background to the story, though: in a previous incarnation the evil woman had made sexual advances on her son, the Bodhisatta, who of course rejected her (Ja no. 472).

³⁵) Ja no. 467: *Samuddavāṇijajātika*, which illustrates a present event, as usual, with a previous birth, a story however fairly unrelated to the present apart from the ever-recurrent dichotomies of stupid and wise, bad and good, as in several other stories on Devadatta in previous lives, like that of “Luckie and Blackie” — as Cowell translates — in Ja no. 11. Further references to Devadatta's death and repeated condemnation to hell is found in Cowell 1895–1913: index, s.v. Devadatta.

Bimbisāra, on Devadatta's advice, has unbearable visions of hell in his dreams, and fears the consequences of his ill deed. Humbly he approaches the Tathāgata, and, "listening to his sweet discourse on the Law and consorting with a virtuous friend, his fears abated and his feeling of horror disappeared, and he recovered his peace of mind and happily cultivated the four ways of Deportment." The story is underlined with an *atītavatthu*, where, in another life, the Bodhisatta tells another king who also committed patricide, of the horrors of hell:

Bright jets of fire on every side shoot from his tortured frame,
His very limbs, hair, nails and all, serve but to feed the flame.
And his body burns apace, racked through and through with pain,
Like a goad-stricken elephant, poor wretch, he roars again.
Whoso from greed or hatred shall, vile creature, slay his sire,
In Kālasutta Hell long time shall agonize in fire.

Consolation is evidently possible, especially through being scared away from bad ways by hellish visions and stories, but the story remains silent on the afterlife of king Ajātasattu. There is evidently hope, however, if one follows the right path, and thus the Bodhisatta ends his versified sermon with a heavenly vision:

Through virtue stored on earth of old the good to Heaven attain,
Here Brahmas, Devas, Indra, lo! ripe fruit of Virtue gain.
This then I say, bear righteous sway throughout thy realm, my king,
For justice done is merit won, nor e'er regret will bring.³⁶

But, of course, attaining heaven by good acts is not the aim of Buddhist practice, which is *nibbāna*, attained by *kamma* neither moral nor non-moral, the complete freedom from rebirth in the whole system of five worlds.

Another *Jātaka* that describes a fully developed hell with all its qualities and paraphernalia is the *Mahānārada-kassapa-jātaka*, where Devadatta again is one of the persons in the *paccupannavatthu* (vol. VI, no. 544). The *Jātaka* also puts its description of hell into the context of Indian philosophy of the day, which very often discussed actions and

³⁶ Further in Cowell 1895–1913:iv, 137–40; Ja no. 530, where the eight classical hot hells are mentioned, and others are referred to.

their fruits. As we have seen, the Buddhists took a firm stance on the principle that *kamma* never disappeared, that actions always had consequences, and in this *Jātaka* that principle is contrasted with the view that destiny, or necessity, *niyati*, always decides our lives, and even though we might reincarnate, our actions mean nothing: we are not purified or defiled by our actions, only time will purify us, and in the end, at the world conflagration, our actions will be purified anyway.³⁷ In the present story king Āṅgati is a recent convert of the Buddha, and identical to the famous Uruvela-Kassapa, whom the Buddha wishes to show as his convert — and not the other way around, since Uruvela-Kassapa was a great teacher and magician. One evening king Āṅgati considers what to do for entertainment and counsels with his ministers. One of them, Alāta, who was a former incarnation of Devadatta, wishes to make war with the neighbouring state to entertain the king, but another minister suggests it would be a better idea to listen to a sage. The sage they choose, though, teaches the doctrine of no retribution and of universal necessity, contrary to the teachings of the Buddha. Alāta agrees, since in his former life, which he remembers, he was a butcher, killing a lot of living beings, but now he is a great general — thus his former bad actions have meant nothing for his status in this life. Another poor man there, an ascetic keeping all his vows and fasts, gains nothing, even though he practiced the same virtuous life also in his former reincarnation — thus he also decides to give up that hard ascetic life for pleasures. The story ends with the king being convinced by the doctrine of no retribution, and orders his retinue and palace to produce for him only pleasure and entertainment, so that he can give up his administrative duties, which provide him with no fun.

It took his delightful daughter, named Rujā, to get him onto better ways: she was born from his main queen — all his other sixteen thousand other wives were barren. “She had offered prayers for a hundred thousand ages,” she kept the fasting days and gave away all her riches to the poor. Useless, said the king, because good actions have no effect. The *kamma*, however, is accumulated gradually, and eventually, like when the load of a ship is too heavy, it sinks, just as one gradually

³⁷) Such views are in Buddhism usually called *ucchedavāda*, “school of discontinuity,” but in general also *kālavāda*, “school of time.”

accumulating bad *kamma* in the end will sink into hell. Likewise, a pair of scales, when filled on one side, will gradually rise like a good person to heaven. It took, however, a tale of her former incarnations, and a sermon of the Bodhisatta on hell, to persuade the king to give up his wrong views and destructive ways.

To illustrate her point she recalled her seven last incarnations. First, she was the son of a smith who committed much evil with his friend — corrupting other men's wives as if he were an immortal. The next incarnation was not that bad, as the son of a rich merchant family, fostered and honoured, learned and devoted to good works. In the next rebirth, though, came the full force of *kamma*: she was reborn in the Rorava Hell for an extended period, and after that as a monkey whose father bit off his testicles, as a result of touching other people's wives.³⁸ Then, before being born as a human again, she was successively a castrated ox, a human neither man nor woman, then a goddess at the court of the king of the gods, and in the end she was born as Rujā, as the bad results waned. She would be born as a woman, though, for seven more rebirths, since to be born as a man is more difficult. She tried to persuade her father with her sermon on *kamma*, but it did not work, and it took the Bodhisatta to depict the punishments of hell and scare him before the king was put on the right track again. The Bodhisatta was then named Nārada and incarnated in none less than the creator god Brahma. Thus the story illustrates the mobility of the cosmos: the creator god is also a particular being in a particular incarnation, not some kind of eternal divine entity. The god took pity on the worshipping girl who wanted to save her father from hell, he assumed the looks of an ascetic in this world and then convinced the king that there indeed are other worlds, like heaven and hell, contrary to the *ucchedavāda* of the teacher Guṇa Kassapa, the materialist, nihilist and believer in necessity, fate. The sermon on hell given by the Bodhisatta spares nothing by way of depicting the worst punishments (Ja IV.124–25). In this sermon on hell we notice the dogs of hell, reminding us to some extent of Cerberus: “Two dogs Sabala and Sāma of giant size, mighty and strong, devour with their iron teeth him who is driven hence and goes to another world.” Also

³⁸) More detailed punishment for such sinners in hell, and the difficulty of escaping it, in Ja no. 314.

the river of hell has similarities with Lethe, etc., though in the Buddhist version the river of hell is a poetic image rather than a cosmologically significant entity: “On flows the river Vetaraṇī, cruel with boiling water and covered with iron lotuses and sharp leaves as he is hurried along covered with blood and with his limbs all cut, in the stream of Vetaraṇī where there is nothing to rest upon — who would ask him for his debt?” Thus the king was saved.

Another widespread motif in the narratives of hell is the visit to the infernal regions. It is found in Buddhism in the *Nimijātaka* (Ja no. 541). King Nimi, again a former incarnation of the Buddha, is the Buddhist Dante, and Mātali, the charioteer of the god Indra — Ānanda, the Buddha’s main disciple, in the present life — plays the part of Vergil. The gods in Indra’s heaven are so impressed by king Nimi, his generosity and his pure behaviour, that they wish to see him in heaven. He is sent for with Indra’s chariot, and on the way to heaven he is shown first the infernal and then the celestial regions by his guide and driver Mātali, who explains the tortures of the sinners in hell. The catalogue is long: misers and those with bad language are eaten by dogs and other animals; those hurting and tormenting people without sins lie on the ground pounded with red-hot irons; those bribing witnesses and denying debts are burned in coal-pits; those hurting ascetics or brahmins are fired in an iron cauldron; those killing birds are boiled in hot water; those cheating by mixing chaff in the grain try, thirsty, to drink from a river, but the water turns into chaff; thieves are pierced by arrowheads and spikes; hunters are fastened by the neck and their bodies are torn to pieces; those harming their friends must lie in a stinking lake; matricides and patricides are punished in a lake of blood; dishonest traders have their tongues pierced with hooks and must live like fish on land; women who leave their husbands to satisfy their lust are buried down to their waists, and men seducing other people’s wives are taken by their legs and thrown headlong into hell; and, the worst of all punishments, which is not specified, though, is for heretics. Indra in his heaven is worried that Nimi would consume all his life in his cosmic travel, so he instructs Mātali to show him the whole universe in a flash, since a small moment in other worlds, like heaven, is like a month for humans, even though at the time the story unfolds, humans lived four times eighty four thousand years — again an example of the enormous time-spans

imagined in Indian mythology. However, Nimi arrives safely in heaven after visiting a number of heavenly abodes and being explained how the extreme happiness experienced by the inmates there is the fruit of good actions. Nimi gives a sermon in heaven on the balance between good deeds and ascetic penance, and then goes back to his kingdom to make his son the new king. He would himself spend his last eighty-four thousand years as an ascetic, as had his eighty-four thousand predecessors. The Buddhist *Jātaka* literature may, with a certain right, be regarded as the first fiction literature. The stories usually seem to have an entertaining character, and may not be intended to be taken as absolutely serious — indeed this tendency develops from the more realistic storytelling in the speeches of the Buddha, via the *Jātakas*, to the Mahāyāna sūtras, which definitely were not intended to be read as anything but fictitious literature into which the dogmas of Buddhism were woven.

The transformation of the Netherworld from an often sad place for the deceased forefathers into a place of retribution and punishment for bad behaviour constitutes a problem in the study of religions. And it is not easy to explain how the idea of hell was propagated. If our understanding of the dates is correct, the Buddhist idea of hell is historically prior to the same idea in the Mediterranean cultures. Thus the following question may be posed: did the idea of hell originate in India with Buddhism and then spread to the West, or did the idea originate independently in the Mediterranean world? Clearly, there was ample communication between India and the West over sea and land during the centuries before and after Christ. Thus the diffusion of the idea of hell from the East to the West is historically and geographically possible. One cannot but notice that the “fully developed hell” originates in the West much at the same time as monastic institutions and practices, and one can argue, even with simple Freudian arguments, that monks and nuns are psychologically inclined to condemn to eternal punishments the sinners practising what they are themselves denied. The monastic institutions and lifestyle “need” hell, one might say. And Buddhism was indeed the earliest and most important tradition to institutionalize monastic life. Thus it is quite possible that both hell and monastic discipline were, if not necessarily “imported,” at least influenced from India when they suddenly became popular in fourth century Egypt and elsewhere around the Mediterranean. In the present paper we have

limited ourselves to the description of the Buddhist hells as they appear in the Pāli sources. Since, however, the original function of hell in Buddhism was to illustrate the workings of *kamma*, the later Buddhist tradition, with all its variants on the theme, largely built on the same principles as the ideas about hell in early Buddhism.

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The abbreviations of the Pāli texts are as von Hinüber 1996:250–53. Terms from the literature are in Pāli, not Sanskrit, given our sources.

The Origins of Christian Hell

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Abstract

The paper re-examines the evidence concerning the early Christian conceptions of punishment of sinners in the afterlife. It commences with the New Testament and the ideas attributed to Jesus and moves on to the apocryphal *Apocalypse of Peter*, composed about a generation later, which enjoyed great popularity among several early Christian circles and was seriously considered for inclusion in the New Testament canon. It is claimed that as it now reads, *Apoc. Pet.* advances ideas about hell that sharply contrast those presented in the New Testament. To solve this riddle, it is proposed that the *Apoc. Pet.*, as it has been preserved, was reorganized at a much later stage to meet the needs of the developing Church. Its original meaning was consequently twisted almost beyond recognition. In its earliest layers, the apocryphal document appears to have been mostly concerned, just like the New Testament, with salvation rather than everlasting chastisement.

Keywords

hell, *Apocalypse of Peter*, martyrs, death, salvation, Paradise

Christian hell seems to be guarding its secrets well. Despite our acquaintance with its basic characteristics, immortalized by Byzantine hagiographers, Hieronymus Bosch, Albrecht Dürer and, not least, by Dante, there is much that invites the careful attention of the historian. What seems to be a particularly perplexing problem (not very often addressed) is the unwarranted manner in which it made its appearance among the early Christians themselves. For, amazing as it may seem to those who tend to read into the earliest Christian documents what is known from later elaborations, it is quite evident that hell, as a place of individual, corporal and eternal torture, applicable to all ages (before and after Christ) and to all nations, is absent from the New Testament: even the

Greek word *kolasis* is almost totally missing.¹ Instead, Jesus' message envisaged a quite different destiny for the unrighteous. A few references may serve to make this clear.

To begin with, Jesus is never presented in the Gospels as introducing new ideas about the afterlife — apart from his conviction that the kingdom of God was immanent.² All his warnings and admonitions seem to be taking for granted what was already commonly accepted by at least some of the well-established trends within Judaism of his time. He is thus, understandably, never reported to have made explicit and elaborate statements concerning the future of the dead.

Frequently in the Gospels, Jesus appears to expect that, after their death, men and women either enter the kingdom of God (also known as the kingdom of heaven or, simply, paradise)³ or are cast into *geenna* (*gehenna* in Latin and other languages).⁴ As all Jews would know, *geenna*, the Greek rendering of the valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem (often, but erroneously, translated in English as hell), was the place where the Canaanites were said to have been sacrificing their children to their god Moloch (Molech in Hebrew).⁵ By the time of Jesus, the

¹ The original meaning of the Greek word *kolasis* is chastisement, but in Christian usage it acquired an eschatological sense and became synonymous to hell. In the New Testament it only appears once in relation to the afterlife, in Matt 25:46 (see below).

² The expression “kingdom of God” was not common among the Jews (it is only attested in Wis 10:10), but the idea of God's kingship was widespread. According to Matt 3:2, belief in the immanence of the “kingdom of heaven” was also shared by John the Baptist.

³ Mark, Luke, John, Paul and most other early Christian authors used the expression “kingdom of God,” while Matthew preferred “kingdom of heaven,” intending, probably, to avoid the word God. In its different forms, the expression appears hundreds of times in the New Testament. On the early Christian uses of the word paradise see Kyrtatas 1998.

⁴ See Mark 9:42–48. The word *geenna* occurs seven times in Matthew, three in Mark and once in Luke. Also once in the Epistle of James. It does not occur in John.

⁵ The valley of Hinnom is simply a location in Neh 11:30 and Josh 15:8. In Jer 7:31–32, 19:2–6, 32:35 it is known as the place where innocent sons and daughters are burned alive. God, it was said, will transform it into a valley of slaughter, where corpses will be offered as food to the birds of the sky and the animals of the earth. According to 2 Kgs 23:10, Josiah desecrated it so that no one would sacrifice his children anymore. Cf. *1 Enoch* 26–27. Regarding modern controversies over Moloch see the contribution by N. Wyatt in this issue.

valley had become a garbage dump, where the dead bodies of criminals were also being disposed. To ensure that the fires burning the garbage and corpses would not be extinguished, sulphur was sometimes added, probably for sanitary purposes.⁶ With good reason Jesus equated *geenna* with the place in which, according to Jewish prophecy, the corpses of those who rebel against God are left unburied, exposed to the worm that never dies and the fire that is never extinguished (Mark 9:48 depending on Isa 66:24; cf. Jdt 16:17). Consequently, he warned his audience not to fear “those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul,” but rather those “who can destroy (*apolesai*) both body and soul in *geenna*” (Matt 10:28).⁷ Thus, in the Gospels, *geenna* meant the death of both the body and the mortal soul, a death that made entrance to the kingdom of God impossible.

Less frequently, Jesus is also presented as anticipating a different destiny for the unrighteous. In a well-known parable, a rich man dressed in purple and fine linen and feasting magnificently every day, was ignoring the needs of the poor beggar Lazarus, who longed to fill himself with what fell from his table. Having died and been buried, the rich man found himself in Hades⁸ burning from thirst and begging for a drop of water in great agony, while the poor man was seen in the embrace of Abraham. A great gulf separated the places where either of them was seated, to prevent crossings from one side to the other (Luke 16:19–31). This image seems to contradict the idea of annihilation and eternal death in *geenna*.

Although contradictions in the eschatology of the period should not be ruled out, it is more probable that the parable deals with a specific category of sinners.⁹ The rich man had clearly offended God with his conduct, or rather with his excessive wealth, but he had not committed

⁶ For similar treatments of criminals among the Greeks and the Romans see Cumont 1922:145.

⁷ Cf. Luke 12:5: “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. . . . Fear him who, after he has killed [i.e. the body], has the power to cast [the soul] into hell (*geenna*).” (For biblical quotations I use the New Jerusalem Bible translation.)

⁸ In the Septuagint, the Greek name Hades commonly translates the Hebrew word Sheol, meaning the world of the dead (not hell).

⁹ See the discussion in Bauckham 1998:97–118, with parallels from Egyptian and Greek traditions.

a mortal sin. Instead of being cast into *geenna* immediately upon his death, he was buried and reached the abode of the dead. His sufferings there may be viewed in the light of widespread ideas in the Mediterranean world, according to which thirst was not a punishment for sins committed but the common lot of the great majority of the dead.¹⁰ The rich man had missed the privilege of refreshment offered to the pious dead, much in the manner it was offered to initiates in pagan cults or to some exceptional dead, as Jesus seems to imply.¹¹ Poor Lazarus, on the other hand, was carried away by the angels into Abraham's embrace, where he could expect nourishment in abundance, but, apparently, had not (yet) entered paradise. Lazarus is not presented in the parable as a really righteous person. His afterlife fortune depended exclusively upon his poverty.¹² It is reasonable to assume that both the rich man and the beggar were in Hades, expecting the final verdict of the Last Judgement.¹³

There is a further related topic on which Jesus' teaching may appear ambiguous or inconsistent. He is portrayed as if suggesting sometimes that judgement will be passed immediately upon a person's death and sometimes that it will be deferred until his second coming. Such inconsistencies, also common in Jewish religious beliefs of the period, may either go back to the original teaching of Jesus or reflect developments in early Christian thinking.¹⁴ It is even more likely that Jesus had a more complex, though not necessarily totally consistent eschatology in mind. Although most of the dead would have to await their resurrection to be judged according to their deeds (Matt 25:31–46), some few could expect a special treatment. Most conspicuous is the case of the repentant criminal on the cross who was granted immediate entry to paradise (Luke 23:40–43), an idea that makes sense under the circumstances and is also in line with Jesus' attitude towards outcasts who

¹⁰ For pagan views about afterlife thirst that are not understood as a punishment for sins, see Cumont 1922:50. Also Graf and Johnston 2007:98–101, 104, 109–17.

¹¹ Refreshment for the pious dead is offered by a bright spring of water according to *1 En.* 22.

¹² In Luke 6:20 Jesus promises the "kingdom of God" to the poor; cf. 14:21.

¹³ This was the reading of the parable by Tertullian in *De anima*.

¹⁴ Similar inconsistencies are also attested in the Dead Sea Scrolls. See Collins 1997, ch. 7. In the second century, this problem was sharply dividing the Christians. See Justin, *Dial.* 80.4.

acknowledge their sins in earnest. Some early Christians understood, with good reason, that this promise was also applicable to martyrs.¹⁵

Despite the ambiguities, Jesus clearly contrasted eternal life to eternal death.¹⁶ Even when he referred to “eternal punishment,” it is rather obvious that what he meant was death with no hope of resurrection, “eternal punishment” being the equivalent of “eternal fire” (Matt 25:31–46), i.e. *geenna*. Jesus was not (and could not have been) ignorant of ideas circulating about afterlife torments.¹⁷ But he certainly did not choose to emphasize this prospect — and neither did his first disciples. Resurrection to them appears to have been a reward offered to a select few.¹⁸

While stressing the expectation of salvation, Paul had nothing to say about hell or afterlife torments in his epistles. The idea of torture as a punishment for wicked deeds is totally absent from his eschatological teaching. Salvation was to him the opposite of death (2 Cor 7:10). In 2 Thess (1:8–10), written in his name, the eschatological expectations of the early Christians are made crystal clear: Jesus, it is written, “will come amid flaming fire; he will impose a penalty on those who do not acknowledge God and refuse to accept the gospel of our Lord Jesus. Their punishment is to be lost eternally, excluded from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his strength on the day when he comes to be glorified among his holy ones and marvelled by all who believe in him.”

¹⁵ See e.g. Tertullian, *De carnis resurrectione* 43. Polycarp, *Philippians* 9, expressed the view that the blessed martyrs were already with the Lord in the place of their due. Cf. Origen, *Exhortation to martyrdom* 30.

¹⁶ John 5:29 contrasts the “resurrection of life” to the “resurrection of condemnation.”

¹⁷ Afterlife tortures were known in Egyptian eschatology, Orphism and some Jewish trends. On “grinding” or “gnashing of teeth” in the afterlife see Matt 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 25:30; Luke 13:28. It is likely that when Jesus referred to “grinding of teeth” he was thinking of an intermediate state, before the eternal death, just like some members of the Dead Sea Scrolls communities believed that dead sinners will be weeping awaiting their destruction, on which see Collins 1997:116. Afterlife punishments in Egyptian theology might have actually been a version of purgatory. Otherwise, the dead were completely eliminated. See Hornung 1994.

¹⁸ Cf. the eschatology envisaged in the prophecy of Dan 12:1–3, according to which, “Of those who are sleeping in the Land of Dust, many will awaken, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting disgrace.” The great majority will remain eternally dead.

Primitive Christian eschatology appears more systematically worked out in Revelation. Its author explicitly envisaged two deaths and two resurrections. All humans, he seems to argue, experience a first death, though the souls of those who were beheaded for the sake of Christ or refused to worship the beast, that is, martyrs, await the resurrection underneath the temple altar, without losing their consciousness (Rev 6:9–11). These special dead will be granted a first resurrection to reign along with Christ for a thousand years. During these years, the devil will be chained in the Abyss, with the entrance shut and sealed.¹⁹ All those granted a first resurrection will thus experience in a living state the second and final resurrection. After the thousand years' period, death and Hades will be emptied and the sea will give up all the dead who are in it. At this point, all the dead will be resurrected and everyone will be judged according to his deeds. Those found guilty will be hurled into the burning lake of fire and sulphur along with death and Hades themselves to meet their second death. The lake of fire (to be equated with *geenna*) will ensure that their bodies will be totally annihilated and, hence, that their second death is final. The author of Revelation reserves a special final fate for the beast, the false prophet and the devil himself. They too will be cast into the lake of fire and sulphur, but, apparently being immortal, will not die. Instead, he anticipates that they will be tortured day and night, forever and ever (Rev 19:19–20:15). This is probably the only clear reference to afterlife torments in the New Testament, a punishment not applicable to mortals.

In brief: By the time all the New Testament documents had been completed, the great majority of Christians were expecting a second coming of the Lord, to be followed by a general resurrection of the dead and a Last Judgment, after which the righteous would live for ever, while sinners would meet their second and final death — unless they had been annihilated immediately after their first death. Many Christians rejected the idea of a thousand years' reign, although they retained

¹⁹ The author of 2 Pet 2:4 expresses the same idea by employing Greek terminology. Sinful angels, he declares, are condemned to the chains of Tartarus (a place normally reserved for the immortal Titans and only exceptionally for humans) awaiting their Judgment. The form *tartarosas* was probably coined by this author. Cf. Jude 6.

the idea that special categories of dead, such as martyrs, were granted either immediate entry to paradise, or a special abode until their entrance to it.

* * *

It therefore comes as a great surprise to the historian that a generation after all the New Testament documents had been completed (and possibly within an even shorter period), a new idea appears to have been advanced, giving an entirely different direction to the eschatological expectations of the early Christians. Instead of total destruction and eternal death, the so-called *Apocalypse of Peter* (*Apoc. Pet.*) envisages all the resurrected sinners as being tortured, with a variety of punishments, designed, more or less, to fit their crimes.²⁰ They are hanging by their tongues, their necks, their hair or their thighs. They are cast into pits filled with excrement or venomous beasts. Their eyes are pierced, their tongues are chewed or their lips are cut off. They thrust themselves down from high places only to return again, and so on. The only details that recall the predictions of Jesus in the Gospels are the unquenchable fire and the undying worms, but they serve a different purpose. Instead of consuming the dead bodies, they are employed as instruments for torture, inflicting pain and causing great agony.²¹

It comes as an even greater surprise that this curious document was seriously considered for inclusion in the New Testament canon, and that it exercised a lasting influence on Christian doctrine, iconography and popular morality.²² As late as the middle of the fifth century it was still being read in some Palestinian churches every year on Good Friday, when Christians fasted in memory of the Passion (Sozomen, *Church History* 7.19.9). In fact, it is the *Apoc. Pet.*, not the New Testament,

²⁰) Twenty-one different punishments have been counted for twenty-one different kinds of sins. For a detailed discussion see Bauckham 1998:215–21.

²¹) For the Ethiopic version of the *Apoc. Pet.* I use the English translation in Müller 1992. For the Greek texts I use the edition by Kraus and Nicklas 2004.

²²) See Metzger 1989:184–86. Jakab 2003 argues that the *Apoc. Pet.* was not a very popular work. The accurate evidence he has collected proves the contrary: by the early fourth century, it was at least known in Rome, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Edessa, North Africa and Asia Minor, and even attained local canonicity.

which introduces us to what we have come to recognize as Christian hell.²³

To the obvious and important problem concerning the transition from *geenna* to hell, or rather the transformation of *geenna* into hell, we have no conclusive solution. Jesus and the early Christians were renowned for their interest in salvation and their belief in overcoming death. To miss the opportunity of entering the kingdom of God was considered by them such a grievous mischief that they did not deem it necessary to imagine anything that could be worse. The general impression is that this remained the mood of the early Christians for the three first centuries (Bremmer 2002:64, and *passim*). It is therefore reasonable to wonder whether the imagery introduced by the *Apoc. Pet.* was originally meant to serve a different purpose from that of cancelling the effects of *geenna* and belief in eternal death as the ultimate punishment for sinners.

Before proceeding with our investigation, we should be reminded that the existing versions of the *Apoc. Pet.* are far removed from its original composition, which most experts place in the second quarter of the second century. The major surviving Greek version comes from a sixth century copy found at Akhmim,²⁴ while a more complete Ethiopic version probably goes back to the seventh or eighth century, and may be a translation from an Arabic translation of a Coptic translation of the Greek original (see Müller 1992:621, 624). The earliest surviving witnesses are two small Greek fragments, known as the Bodleian and the Rainer fragments, which belong to the same fifth century manuscript (Müller 1992:621).²⁵ Thus, from the original composition of a popular apocalyptic text that was considered by many as inspired and authoritative, at least three to six centuries lapsed until our surviving versions were copied (and, perhaps, composed).²⁶ Differences among

²³) For general introductions see Bauckham 1988; Müller 1992; Elliot 1993:593–612; Bremmer 2003a. For up to date bibliographies see Bauckham 1988:4741–50; Bremmer 2003b; and Kraus and Nicklas 2004:131–38.

²⁴) Suggested dates for the major Greek text range from the fourth to the twelfth centuries, but the sixth century seems most probable. See van Minnen 2003, with bibliography.

²⁵) This date, originally proposed by M. R. James, has been generally accepted. Cf. van Minnen 2003:34–35.

²⁶) Clement of Alexandria was among those who quoted from the *Apoc. Pet.* as if from a text with scriptural value.

all these versions make it perfectly clear that, like all apocryphal documents, the *Apoc. Pet.* was being constantly revised and reworked to serve the needs of developing and even conflicting ideas.

We are very fortunate, therefore, to possess yet a further account of these early Christian eschatological expectations, summarized in the *Oracula Sibyllina*.²⁷ Many of the details provided are pretty much the same as those known from the surviving versions of the *Apoc. Pet.*, but the beginning and end of the story differ radically. At the end of time, it is anticipated, a great river of fire will consume every place. Burning in this fire, all souls of men shall gnash their teeth (II.191–205). This terrible ordeal will be followed by a general resurrection. The dead will be given souls, breath and speech, bones fitted together with joints, flesh and nerves, veins and skin about the flesh and hair on their heads, to be judged by Christ (II.214–44). Everybody will pass through the burning river and unquenchable flame. The righteous, unharmed, shall be saved, while the impious shall be punished for whole ages — though not eternally (II.252–55). Great torments, listed in detail, await all sinners, angels punishing them with flaming whips. They shall all pay threefold for every evil deed they wrought. They shall gnash their teeth while wasting away with violent and consuming thirst; they shall call death fair and yet death shall flee from them, for neither death nor night shall give them rest any more (II.255–308).

The pious, however, having been rescued by angels from the burning river, will be brought into the light and a carefree life, with springs of wine, milk and honey. Earth will be the same for all, not divided by walls and fences. In this place of bliss there shall be no pauper, rich man or tyrant, no slave, nor any great or small, no kings, no rulers — all will share in common (II.313–24). The pious will furthermore be granted the privilege of interceding in favour of those condemned.²⁸ With God's consent they will be able to save others from the devouring fire and from everlasting torment. Those rescued in this way (obviously not the totality of sinners) will be sent into another, eternal life. Interestingly, this life will not take place in the paradise of the pious, but in a plain

²⁷) See Parke 1988:152–73. I use the English translation of the Christian *Oracula Sibyllina* in Schneemelcher and Wilson 1991–92, 2:656–84.

²⁸) Cf. Jude 22–23, where it is said that (while still upon earth) the pious may save some from everlasting fire.

called, after the Greek fashion, the Elysian field and the Acherusian Lake (II.331–38). It looks as if the saved sinners will be granted the deficient form of a pagan heaven, much like Dante's limbo.

We are not told on what grounds the pious will chose to save some sinners rather than others. It is possible that they shall recognize relatives, friends or people whom they remember for some good deeds in their earthly lives. But is even more likely that the pious will rescue in particular those whom they remember as their persecutors and tormentors by forgiving them.²⁹

Our author is similarly silent regarding the fate of sinners that will not be selected by the pious for salvation. But if the consuming fire is expected to function like Jesus' *geenna*, then all the anticipated ordeals will culminate in an eternal annihilation of the body, precluding any possibility of redemption. It must be noted, however, that the *Sibylline* version was perfectly content to leave the matter unspecified.

The idea lying behind this version is evident. In place of a clear dichotomy between eternal life and eternal death, as anticipated in the New Testament, a new state was being introduced. This new state, which contains all the external characteristics of what we are accustomed to call hell, though not its eschatological significance, was meant to provide a new opportunity for salvation. The ordeals predicted were as ferocious as could be imagined because they were meant to offer a possibility for salvation after death. They were a form of atonement.³⁰

A purifying fire, best known in its Platonic elaboration, was not a strange idea to the Jews. The prophet Malachi, for example, was expecting God's messenger to come like a refiner's fire, like a fuller's alkali or soap. "He will take his seat as refiner and purifier; he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they can make the offering to Yahweh with uprightness" (Mal 3:1–3). Interestingly, such ideas may be detected in the New Testament as well. Jesus was expected to baptize not in water, but with the Holy Spirit and fire

²⁹) This view was held by some of Augustine's opponents. They claimed that if the saints had been praying for their enemies while they were still being tormented by them, they will certainly do so when they see them prostrated in humble supplication. See *De civ. Dei* 21.18.24.

³⁰) For a different interpretation, rejecting the idea of purification, see Bauckham 1998:234.

(Matt 3:11). Paul was even more explicit. “The Day which dawns in fire,” he argued, “will make it [i.e. each person’s handiwork] clear and the fire itself will test the quality of each person’s work. The one whose work stands up to it will be given his wages; the one whose work is burnt down will suffer the loss of it, though he himself will be saved; he will be saved as someone might expect to be saved from a fire” (1 Cor 3:13–15). Some people, Paul seems to suggest, will not miss the eternal resurrection altogether, but they will not be rewarded in the same way as those who preserve the correct doctrine. The author of the *Apoc. Pet.* developed such ideas even further. While Jesus was expected to baptize with fire sinners who were still living, he extended the privilege to encompass already dead sinners, accepting the supplication of his elect (Copeland 2003).

Luckily we can be pretty sure that the *Oracula Sybillina* preserves indeed, at this important point, the original meaning of the *Apoc. Pet.* A very small Greek fragment from the fifth century contains the section under consideration and clearly agrees with it.³¹ The elect will be able to save whomsoever they ask. Having been selected, sinners will be given a precious baptism providing salvation from the Acherusian Lake, situated, as was said, in the Elysian field. But only Jesus, the exalted chosen ones and the patriarchs enter the (real) eternal kingdom.

Thanks to this fragment, it is even possible to detect (clumsy) revisions of the original text. Whereas in the Ethiopic version a totally unnecessary baptism of salvation “in the field (!) Akrosja (=Acherusia) which is called Aneslesleja (=Elysium)” (14) is predicted for the elect, according to the Greek fragment, the baptism of salvation in this lake is reserved for sinners, if the elect intercede on their behalf. It is clearly sinners that need a second baptism after death. Other inconsistencies are also easily explained. An unquenchable fire that burns only half of a sinner’s body and never-sleeping worms that consume their entrails are very awkward ways of interpreting Jesus’ description of *geenna*.³²

³¹⁾ The fragment (P.Vindob. G 39756) corresponds to and contradicts §14 of the Ethiopic version. See James 1931. For a different interpretation see van Minnen 2003:31–34. The problems with the textual emendations proposed by James are discussed by Adamik 2003:83–90. For a new edition of the fragment with German and English translations see Kraus and Nicklas 2004:126–28.

³²⁾ Cf. *Apoc. Pet.* 9 of the Ethiopic version and 27 of the Greek.

Furthermore, we may also understand why expressions suggesting that the tortures of hell will last forever are found in the Ethiopic version alone and not in the corresponding Akhmim Greek version. We may reasonably assume that they are later additions.³³

* * *

It is not difficult to surmise why some early Christians thought that the New Testament doctrine of *geenna* needed further elaboration. As they were concerned with salvation, not condemnation, the idea of a final and universal judgement must have appeared to them unjust for all those who had died before Christ, for all the unbaptized and for the great multitude of sinners who had transgressed the complex and demanding moral codes of the new faith. As a (partial) solution to such considerations, Christ is portrayed already in the New Testament as having preached in Hades — what is known as the harrowing of hell (1 Pet 3:19–20, 4:6). It was obviously thought that even the dead should be offered an opportunity to repent and be purified.³⁴

Apoc. Pet. was probably composed within a Greek or, at least, Hellenized milieu. Although Egyptian ideas are clearly detectable, references to Hades, Tartarus, the Elysian Fields and the Acherusian Lake suggest that its author was competing with Orphic, Platonic and Pythagorean ideas.³⁵ The Greek way to salvation was far less demanding and, in some cases, secured only through an initiation. By contrast, Christians could be struggling throughout their whole lives and yet miss the resurrection,

³³) It is generally believed (with good reason) that the Ethiopic version corresponds closer to the original than the surviving Akhmim Greek, but in this particular instance it has clearly been reworked and is further removed from the original. Some scholars think otherwise. Bauckham, for example (1998:210), observes the problem but insists that the Ethiopic version only increased the relevant references that must have been present in the original.

³⁴) The exact meaning of 1 Pet 3:19–20 and 4:6 is being debated by modern theologians, but many early Christians believed that Jesus had actually descended to Hades in order to offer salvation to dead Jews. See Ignatius, *Magn.* 9; Justin, *Dial.* 72.4; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.20.4 and 4.22.1.

³⁵) On the interaction of such religious trends see Stroumsa Forthcoming. It is of course conceivable and even likely that these particular Greek ideas and concepts had already found their way to Jewish circles.

even though they had been initiated, i.e. baptized. *Apoc. Pet.* was thus offering a consolation. Although the kingdom of God would be granted exclusively to the elect, even sinners could aspire to at least a pagan variety of bliss.

It was probably at the same time that some Gnostics were also considering a tripartite eschatology. Whereas the spirituals were expected to be saved completely and the materials were expected to be destroyed, the intermediate kind, the psychics, could also hope for (some kind of) salvation.³⁶

The author of *Apoc. Pet.* may have been even more influenced by contemporary events. He composed his work at a time when numerous Christians, some of them voluntarily, were meeting the swords of their executioners, were struggling against beasts in the arenas and were cast into the flames by their persecutors. If such ordeals were thought to be the most secure paths to eternal life, absolving all former transgressions, then afterlife tribulations should also be effective in purifying sinners.³⁷ God, who was able to assemble all the members of the diseased martyrs and to collect their ashes to give them a new life in his kingdom, could similarly save men and women from the flames of an eschatological, purifying fire.

* * *

The transformation of Jesus' *geenna* into a purifying fire was not the end of the story. The idea that even some sinners could be rescued from eternal death may have appealed to some Christianized Greeks, but was not (or did not seem) sufficiently edifying. Justin, for example, who was in agreement with the predictions of the Sibyl, never mentions the possibility of salvation after death (*1 Apol.* 19–20). The arguments of the great third-century theologian Origen are much more instructive.

Origen, in more or less the same vein as the author of *Apoc. Pet.*, thought of *geenna* as place of refinement. Punishment, he thought, is transformed into a means by which certain souls are purified through

³⁶) See Thomassen 2006:169, also 406–14 on a ritual for the dying.

³⁷) The suggestion that Christian ideas of the afterlife were influenced by the persecutions is made by Bremmer 2002:70. On voluntary martyrdom as a death leading to eternal life see Ste. Croix 2006.

torment.³⁸ He refrained, however, from being too explicit, warning his readers that, “it is not right to explain to everybody all that might be said on this subject [i.e. of purifying fire]. . . . It is risky to commit to writing the explanation of these matters, because the multitude do not require any more instruction than that punishment is to be inflicted upon sinners. It is not of advantage to go on the truths which lie behind it because there are people who are scarcely restrained by fear of everlasting punishment from the vast flood of evil and the sins that are committed in consequence of it” (*Contra Celsum* 6.25–6).³⁹ Others were much more negative. They totally rejected any possibility of post-mortem baptism for salvation and, consequently, dismissed *Apoc. Pet.* as a heretical book. Its inclusion in the New Testament canon was out of the question. In the fourth century, Augustine felt compelled to deal extensively with the problem of compassionate Christians, as he called them. Some among them taught that the guilty would be saved through the intercession of the saints. Their use of ideas advanced by the (original) *Apoc. Pet.* were rejected and condemned (*De civ. Dei* 21.17–27).⁴⁰

Apoc. Pet. was already, however, enjoying great popularity, at least in some regions and some sections of the Christian world. It was considered apostolic and inspired. Instead of simply rejecting it, some thought that it was wiser and more effective to revise it. The two (late) main versions that have come to light, the Akhmim Greek and the Ethiopic, appear to be two different attempts to cope with its basic doctrines.⁴¹ The sufferings, originally introduced as possible forms of atonement, were retained, but made to serve a different purpose. Instead of providing a further possibility for salvation through temporary tribulations, they became elaborate forms of eternal and cruel punishments.⁴² It was

³⁸) At this point Origen cites the prophecy of Malachi 3:2–3.

³⁹) As translated by H. Chadwick. For Origen’s controversial positions regarding the afterlife see Crouzel 1985:235–66. According to a later section of the Ethiopic version of *Apoc. Pet.* (see note 43 below) the Lord warns Peter not to inform sinners about all the details of his divine plan, “lest they transgress the more and sin.” See Elliott 1993:612.

⁴⁰) For a detailed presentation of the problem see Bauckham 1998, ch. 7.

⁴¹) The original text is probably best represented in the two small Greek fragments, the Bodleian and the Rainer. This topic requires detailed analysis. For a recent discussion see Roig Lanzillotta 2003:150–56.

⁴²) Actually, the Ethiopic version needs special and more detailed treatment. As Pesthy

these revised versions of *Apoc. Pet.* that exercised a lasting influence on Christian eschatology. Thus, the fire originally introduced in the Christian world as a metaphor for death was subsequently presented as a purifying element, leading to salvation, only to become an instrument for eternal torture. As such, it has come to dominate Christian ideas of hell ever since.

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2003 has shown, the text of *Apoc. Pet.* belongs to a much longer treatise that reveals the truth about sinners by stages. It is only in the last section that readers are actually informed that all references to everlasting punishment serve a pedagogical purpose. Evidently, all who believe in Christ will be ultimately pardoned.

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Christian Hell: From the *Apocalypse of Peter* to the *Apocalypse of Paul*

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Abstract

Although the *Apocalypse of Paul* is just one of the hell-scapes that were produced by early Christianity, it is the most important step in the direction that would find its apogee in Dante. It is also a product of a specific place and time, undoubtedly produced for certain needs, even though these are no longer recoverable. In my contribution I first look at its place and date of origin, probably a monastic milieu in Egypt around AD 400. I then consider the sins in the *Apocalypse of Paul* and note that the author has mostly concentrated on matters of religious concern, whereas, in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, more general ethical problems, such as murder or false witnesses, still play a role. Moreover, there is no longer a border drawn against the pagans outside the Church, but against those who do not profess the orthodox doctrines. Finally, I discuss the question to what extent the punishments have been inspired by the penalties and tortures of the martyrs. Were they mainly inspired by literary tradition or by the historical reality?

Keywords

Apocalypse of Peter, *Apocalypse of Paul*, hell, monastic milieu, judicial savagery

In the summer of 1931 the aged Wilamowitz, the greatest classical scholar of his time, feverishly worked on his last book, *Der Glaube der Hellenen*, knowing that he would have little time left for completing this work that was clearly close to his heart (Henrichs 1985). On Orpheus and Orphism, he was pretty sceptical. He admitted that there had been an Orphic *Theogony*, but, as he argued, this did not prove a “besondere Religion und erst recht keine Gemeinde,” an “orphische Seelenlehre soll erst einer nachweisen” and the Orphic Gold Leaves

certainly were not Orphic. Moreover and rather strikingly, he also rejected the idea that “Platons Hadesbilder und zugleich die Petrusapokalypse von Orpheus stammen” (Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1959, 2:191–202).

Why would Wilamowitz mention this *Apocalypse of Peter*, which few of his contemporary classicists would have read? To answer this question, we will have to go back some forty years in time. In the winter of 1886–87, a late sixth- or early seventh-century codex with substantial fragments of the *Apocalypse* in Greek (G) had been found in the grave of, probably, a monk in Akhmim, ancient Panopolis.¹ In 1910, however, the French scholar S. Grébaud published an Ethiopic (E) text that not only was more complete, but also came closer to the Greek original, as scholars gradually realised.² The situation became even more complicated in the years 1911 and 1924 through the separate publication of two fragments of the same, later fifth-century, miniature codex with small portions of another Greek text that was closer to the Ethiopian version than the Akhmim codex and was possibly written in Alexandria (see now Kraus and Nicklas 2004:121–30).

The *Apocalypse of Peter* appeared in three (!) editions almost immediately, and roused great interest among the leading classical and patristic scholars of its day, as the names of Harnack, Usener and Wilamowitz in the various critical apparatuses still attest. Moreover, it inspired Albrecht Dieterich’s still useful and very learned study of the underworld, *Nekyia*, which appeared only one year later, a testimony to his great erudition.³ Dieterich showed that the Christian ideas of hell certainly had been nourished by Orphic ideas, even though he overstressed his point. A decade later Eduard Norden, who, like Dieterich, had also immediately reacted to the new discovery (Norden 1966), published the first edition of his commentary on *Aeneid* VI,⁴ in which he also argued Vergil’s dependency

¹) Bouriant 1892 (editio princeps); Robinson and James 1892; Harnack 1892. For the most recent edition see Kraus and Nicklas 2004. For a discussion of the codex, its date and the circumstances of its discovery see Van Minnen 2003 and 2007.

²) For the Ethiopic version see Buchholz 1987:162–244 and Marassini 1997. For the Greek version see the recent edition and translation by Kraus and Nicklas 2004:81–138.

³) Dieterich 1893. For Dieterich (1866–1908) see the biography by Wünsch (1911); Pfister 1938; Betz 2003:14–26; Wessels 2003:96–128.

⁴) Norden 1903:5 (sources); see also Bremmer 2009b.

on Orphic sources.⁵ The great contemporary interest in the *Apocalypse of Peter* is still somewhat surprising, but it may have been partially helped by the fact that the study of the afterlife had become fashionable at the end of the nineteenth century.⁶

Although Wilamowitz did not mention any names in his passage on Orphism, it is clear that he aimed at Dieterich's *Nekyia*, but his rejection must also have struck Eduard Norden, whose commentary on *Aeneid* VI had recently appeared in a third edition. Although Wilamowitz had enthusiastically welcomed its appearance on publication, in 1903, he had grown more sceptical about the project later in his career.⁷ In fact, around 1930 the increasing and regretful specialisation of the study of the ancient world into patristics and classics as well as the anti-Christian sentiment of several German classicists had led to a neglect of the *Apocalypse of Peter* in classical circles, which lasted until 2007 when the productive Jane Lightfoot published a big commentary on the first two books of the Sibylline Oracles (Lightfoot 2007). In it she develops in detail earlier findings that much of the second Sibylline book leans heavily on the *Apocalypse of Peter*, and her book is a model as to how patristics and classics can be combined.

The *Apocalypse of Peter* is highly important in the history of hell, as it was "the first major Christian account of postmortem punishment outside the New Testament."⁸ Unfortunately, we cannot be totally certain about its date and place of origin. In the end we are left with two conclusions. First, it was first written in Palestine but revised by a Jewish-Christian author who used an Egyptian source or version and clearly was well-educated and at home in Greek culture. This orientation is also supported by the fact that he used the Septuagint for his quotations of the Old Testament. Alternatively, we also cannot exclude that it was written by a similarly educated author in Egypt using a Palestinian text. At this point, we simply do not know (Van Ruiten 2003). On the other hand, its date is much less disputed. At present there is a

⁵ For Norden (1868–1941) see most recently Rüpke 1993; Kytzler et al. 1994; Calder and Huss 1997; Schröder 1999; Baumgarten 2006.

⁶ See the well-researched study by Krech (2007).

⁷ For his changing appreciation compare Wilamowitz's letters of 11 June 1903 and 25 August 1926 in Calder and Huss 1997:18–21, 235–36.

⁸ Bernstein 1993:282, with an informative account of the *Apocalypse* (282–91).

general consensus that it must date from the last decades of the first half of the second century AD, given its mention by Clement of Alexandria (*apud* Eus. *HE* 6.14.1; cf. Lightfoot 2007:132).

Its lurid and gruesome picture of hell is, as Dieterich and Norden had already seen, partially inspired by Aristophanes and Plato (or Pseudo-Plato). From them the author took the Orphic mire (*borboros*) and the bad smells (8 E), but the idea of burning mud (23–24 G) seems to be the author's own invention, just as the stress on blood (31 G), which the pagan Lucian happily took over in his *True Histories* (2.30).⁹ The great transgressors of Greek mythology seem to have been another source of inspiration. The continuous throwing down of gays and lesbians from a great precipice, who then have to climb up in order to be thrown down again (10 E, 32 G), reminds one of Sisyphus, and the carnivorous birds that torture those that did not honour their parents and the elderly (11.4–5 E) recall Prometheus' vulture. The great stress on blasphemy (9.3 E; 28 G) and persecution (9.1–2 E; 27 G) as major sins is somewhat surprising, but among Jews and Greeks we usually find the exhortation to honour both God and the parents;¹⁰ one is also reminded of the exhortation of Phlegyas in Virgil's underworld: *discite iustitiam moniti et non temnere divos* (*Aen.* 6.620), on the content of which the major commentaries are remarkably silent. Here it seems that the focus on God and the threat of His denial during the persecutions has inspired our author to exalt God's position. That is why this category is so well represented.

The text of the *Apocalypse of Peter* was not painstakingly preserved but continuously adapted to changing theological insights and needs, like most apocalyptic texts, with the exception of the Book of Revelation. As the Ethiopic version was probably translated from an Arabic translation of a Greek original, one must conclude that older and newer versions continued to co-exist peacefully. The older form may well have been preserved by congregations that considered the text to be of the same value as the other canonical books of the New Testament. In fact, the mid-fifth-century church historian Sozomen (VII.19.9) relates that some Palestinian churches still read the *Apocalypse of Peter* once a year,

⁹ For Lucian's knowledge of our Apocalypse and other early Christian treatises see Möllendorff 2000:427–32, and 2005.

¹⁰ Van der Horst 1978:116–17, with many references; Wilson 2004:82–83.

although it had gone out of fashion around that time, and the Church had started to consider it a heretical treatise.

In the end, though, the reliance on Jewish models and stress on persecution must have made the *Apocalypse of Peter* look old fashioned, and in due time it was replaced by the most popular medieval apocryphal Apocalypse, that of Paul, the subject of the rest of my paper.¹¹ We still have several long Latin versions left that go back, albeit sometimes heavily abbreviated and corrupted, to the lost original Greek version, but the great majority of the medieval versions contain only the description of Paul's visit to hell. It was this version that could be found in Latin and several vernacular languages in Western Europe, and that remained popular until the Reformation.¹² In the East, the original Greek version survived only in an abbreviated version,¹³ although its lost prototype became the source of the Syriac version,¹⁴ which in turn is the source of the Armenian and Arabic versions.¹⁵ The Coptic version,¹⁶ which lacks chapters 1–14, also goes back to the lost longer Greek version and is very close to the best Latin version (L¹), which has survived most completely in a Parisian manuscript of the ninth century.¹⁷ The author of the *Apocalypse of Paul* most likely knew the *Apocalypse of Peter* and borrowed some elements from it.¹⁸ Given the difference in time between the two *Apocalypses* we may expect certain changes to have arisen and, after we have looked at the date and place of origin of the *Apocalypse of Paul* (§ 1), we will analyse the old and new sins and

¹¹ For a fuller analysis of hell in the *Apocalypse of Peter* see Bremmer 2009a.

¹² For all these versions see now Jiroušková 2006. For a full bibliography see Bremmer 2007a.

¹³ Tischendorf 1866:xiv–xviii, 34–69; add now Bouvier and Bovon 2004.

¹⁴ For text and translation see Ricciotti 1933.

¹⁵ Armenian: Leloir 1986:113–72. Arabic: Bausi 1992; 1999.

¹⁶ Budge 1915:534–74 (text), 1043–84 (translation); cf. Roig Lanzillotta 2007.

¹⁷ Unless otherwise indicated I quote this version, which has now been authoritatively edited, together with the other long versions, by Silverstein and Hilhorst (1997). The translations are adapted from H. Duensing and A. de Santos Otero in Schneemelcher and Wilson 1991–92, 2:712–48.

¹⁸ This is contested by Himmelfarb 1983:140–47, who notes clear significant parallels but still postulates “a well-known tradition or traditions, not necessarily written” as its explanation. This is unnecessary, as the author of the *Apocalypse of Paul* could easily have known the *Apocalypse of Peter*, which was still available in Egypt in his time.

sinner (§ 2), discuss some punishments (§ 3), and end with a few conclusions (§ 4).

1. Date and Place of Origin

Where and when was the *Apocalypse of Paul* written? According to Silverstein and Hilhorst, “the Apocalypse of Paul was written originally in Greek and in Egypt.” It was “evidently” known “to the Egyptian Christians about the middle of the third century” and may be even older than that. This Greek text, thus still Silverstein and Hilhorst, was carried to Asia Minor and there “reissued in a ‘second edition’ with a preface supporting its authenticity.” This new preface put the discovery “by a standard Roman dating formula in the consulship of Theodosius the Younger and Flavius Constantinus, that is to say, in the year 420” (Silverstein and Hilhorst 1997:11). Is this reconstruction tenable?

At first sight the answer seems simple, as the Apocalypse itself supplies us with an answer. Its prologue tells us: “(1) In the consulate of Theodosius Augustus the Younger and Cynegius (AD 388), in that time there lived a *honoratus* in Tarsus in the house that once had belonged to Saint Paul.¹⁹ An angel appeared in the night and told him in a revelation that he should destroy the foundations of the house and make public what he found. He thought however that these were delusions.

(2) When the angel came for the third time, he whipped him and compelled him to destroy the foundations. And, when digging, the man found a marble box inscribed on the sides. In it was the revelation of Saint Paul and his sandals, in which he used to walk when teaching the word of God. But he feared to open that box and gave it to a judge. Having accepted it, the judge sent it as it was, sealed with lead, to the Emperor Theodosius, fearing that it was something else (other than the *Apocalypse*). When he had accepted it, the Emperor opened it and found

¹⁹⁾ According to *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* VI 2949.25 sqq., a *honoratus* is a *titulus sollemnis magistratum, magistratibus functorum codicillis exornatorum aevi imperatorii, or de iis qui magistratibus, gradibus, administrationibus publicis sim. funguntur vel functi sunt*. The title seems to be mentioned for the first time in *Codex Theodosianus* (CTh) 12.6.4 (AD 365). Boffito (1907) writes Honoratus, but the introduction of a name of an unknown person seems less likely here.

the revelation of Saint Paul. He sent a copy to Jerusalem and kept the original.²⁰

There can be little doubt as to what the function is of this prologue. It clearly has to authenticate the *Apocalypse* as a treatise by the apostle himself, apparently hidden, of all places, in his own house in Tarsus! The strategy of authentication by the discovery of an old manuscript was well known in antiquity since Acusilaus and Euhemerus and has repeatedly been studied.²¹ Yet the strategy does not necessarily mean that its claims are completely false. Against Silverstein and Hilhorst,²² we note that the stress of the author on the authenticity of the *Apocalypse* makes it very unlikely that there was already another *Apocalypse of Paul*. And indeed, our only source mentioning an earlier *Apocalypse* with that title is the thirteenth-century Syrian scholar Barhebraeus in his *Nomocanon*, who quotes Origen as saying that, “the *Apocalypse of Paul* with other apocalypses and the Teaching of the Apostles and the Epistles (sic) of Barnabas and Tobit and the Shepherd and son of Sirach are accepted in the Church. But many do not accept the Book of the Shepherd and the Apocalypse of John” (7.9; tr. Casey). However, Barhebraeus does not give a specific source for his quotation,²³ and did not know Greek (Noeldeke 1892:254–55). As Origen seems to have accepted only the Apocalypse of John into the New Testament canon from the contemporary Apocalypses (Roukema 2004:101–2),²⁴ the quotation

²⁰) There is an interesting parallel for this unique dual preservation. According to the Latin Recension B of the originally Greek *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri*, Apollonius “wrote an account of all his own and his family’s vicissitudes, and made two copies: one he deposited in the temple of Diana of the Ephesians, the other in his own library” (51.26–28 Kortekaas). As this detail is absent from the slightly older Recension A, and B may have been translated in Rome at about the same time as the *Apocalypse of Paul*, mutual influence can hardly be excluded, the more so as Tarsus plays an important role in the *Historia Apollonii*, which may even have been written there; cf. Bremmer 1998:169–70.

²¹) Festugière 1950:319–24; 1972:272–74; Speyer 1970:60–65, 130–31 (Prologue); Piovanelli 2007.

²²) Who follow Casey 1933:26–32.

²³) Casey (1933:27) suggests that the whole passage is a quotation from Origen and derives from his commentary on Hebrews, but the last part hardly fits the style of Origen and points to a secondary source.

²⁴) Regarding Origen’s opinion of the apocryphal writings, A. van der Hoek (1995:110) notes that, “Origen had a more limited selection and generally showed more caution” than Clement.

cannot be first-hand and will have been influenced by the later popularity of the *Apocalypse of Paul* (similarly, Roukema 2005:279–80). Consequently, there is no reason to speak of an *Urtext* or a “second edition” of our *Apocalypse* (thus, persuasively, Piovaneli 2007:48–49), the less so as nothing of such a text has survived to justify speaking of a “first version.”

Regarding its date, given that Theodosius II ruled from 408 to 450, the dating formula is obviously a mistake of L¹ (or his source), due to a misreading of *Theodosio Aug. II*, that is, “Theodosius (I, 379–395) being consul for the second time.”²⁵ Why was this date chosen? It has recently been argued that this was because Theodosius was associated with Valentinian II in the reconstruction of St Paul Outside the Walls, but the building of that basilica was already initiated in 386, Theodosius entered Rome only in 389 and nothing in the *Apocalypse* points to Rome as its place of origin. On the other hand, the death of Cynegius in the very year 388 suggests that the choice of his name was not arbitrary. He was a staunch Christian, who was responsible for the destruction of pagan sanctuaries in Syria and Egypt, even in the last year of his life, and a great friend of monks and ascetics.²⁶ Given the number of references to the latter in the text, it seems plausible that the author chose the date in honour of a spiritual friend. This conclusion also implies that Cynegius was still in living memory at the moment of writing.

Such a recent date is supported by the fact that around 416 Augustine in his *Treatise on John* (98.8 = *CCSL* 36.581) mentions that some people had concocted an *Apocalypsim Pauli, quam sana non recipit Ecclesia* and in his only slightly later *Enchiridion* (29.112–13 = *CCSL* 46.109–10) he speaks of the mitigation of the lot of the damned in terms that suggest a reference to our *Apocalypse* (44). It is not so strange that it was Augustine who mentions our *Apocalypse* around those years. The Pelagian controversy had made him think over once again the

²⁵ As is persuasively observed by Silverstein and Hillhorst 1997:19 n.3, who refer to the dating formula for 388 in the *Consularia Constantinopolitana: Theodosio Aug. II et Cynegio cons.*; add the same dating formula in *CTh* 5.14–16 and 16.4.2. Yet in the main text they stick to the date of 420, as Piovaneli 2007:34 n.25 well observes.

²⁶ On Maternus Cynegius see Martindale 1971:235–36, s.v. Maternus Cynegius 3; add more recently: Frend 1990; Wiemer 1995; García Moreno 2002; Hahn 2004:79–83. Destructions in Syria: Libanius, *Or.* 30; Theodoret, *HE* 5.21.7. Egypt: *Consularia Constantinopolitana ad AD 388* = *Chronica Minora* I p. 244 (MGH); Zosimus 4.37.3.

problem of posthumous salvation and during these years he repeatedly came back to the fate of the dead (see the survey by Trumbower 2001:126–40). Thus he discussed the fate of Perpetua's brother Dinocrates, although he did not discuss, at least not in the surviving works, Thecla's prayer for Falconilla in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, even though he knew her story.²⁷ It will have been this preoccupation that must have brought the *Apocalypse of Paul* to his attention, albeit perhaps orally rather than that he actually had read the treatise. Finally, around 443, Sozomen (*Hist. Eccl.* 7.19.9), who explicitly mentions that none of the ancients knew the book, actually went to Tarsus where the aged presbyter Kilix informed him that the book was a fraud by heretics.

A later date for the *Apocalypse of Paul* also better fits the special position of the apostle Paul, who suddenly rose to prominence both in the Eastern and Western Church in the last decades of the fourth century. This ascendance is well illustrated by Augustine's interest in him in the West, and in the East Chrysostom's *Panegyrics of Saint Paul* is a manifestation of the same phenomenon.²⁸

Finally, Sozomen (7.9.10) notes that "most monks praise" the *Apocalypse of Paul*, and the oldest Latin references also come from a monastic milieu (Paupert 1993:115–17, 119). As the text actually refers to ascetics and monks (§ 2), the monastic milieu of late antique Egypt seems to be its most likely place of origin.²⁹ An Egyptian origin is also supported by a passage in the Coptic version that has not yet been adduced in this connection. Immediately after its surviving beginning (= L¹ 16), it describes the "Powers of Darkness." This section appears only in the Coptic translation, but may well have been part of the original Greek version, as it is very difficult to ascertain that it is an interpolation (see the text and discussion by Roig Lanzillotta 2007:171–74). One group of the Powers is there described as having "crocodile faces," probably another reference to Egypt. Thus the original Greek version will have

²⁷ Dinocrates: Trumbower 2001:76–90; Bremmer 2002:105–12. Thecla and Falconilla: Trumbower 2001:56–75; add Bremmer 2001:153; Solin 2004:172.

²⁸ Piovaneli 2007 n.47; add Kretschmar 1977:78; Brown 2000:144, 508–9.

²⁹ As was already concluded by Casey 1933:26. The objections of Silverstein and Hilhorst (1997:14) are hardly persuasive and presuppose "pre-fourth and pre-fifth century forms of the text," whose existence still has to be proven. Hilhorst 2007:18 is much more persuasive.

been produced in Egypt around 400, and the Latin translation will have been made at the end of the fifth century, as the converging references to its text in the *Regula Magistri* (de Vogüé 1964, 2:188–90, 350–51, 506), Caesarius of Arles (Fischer 1951), and the *Decretum Gelasianum* (5.5.1) suggest.³⁰

2. Old and New Sins and Sinners

Having looked at the date and place of origin, let us now take a brief look at the content of the *Apocalypse of Paul*, which can be divided into seven parts. After the discovery of the manuscript (1–2), the creation complains to God about man (3–6), whose deeds the angels report to God (7–10). An angel leads Paul to the firmament where he sees the death and judgement of a righteous person and two sinners (11–18). He then visits Paradise (19–30) and hell, where an *angelus interpretis* presents him with a survey of sins and sinners (31–44), usually in response to a question (“These are those who are...”). Hereafter he returns to Paradise (45–51).³¹ As even this brief summary suggests, the text is clearly a composite one of pieces of variable length that has incorporated different sources, which are often no longer recoverable. Hell occupies the longest part of the book but is hardly its centre.

Which sins and sinners does the author note in his tour of hell? I list them in a concise manner as follows:

<i>Sin and sinners</i>	<i>Punishment</i>
Neither hot nor cold	Men and women immersed in a river of fire.
Inappropriate discussions after church	Immersed up to the knees.
Fornication after the Eucharist	Immersed up to the navel
Slandering one another in church	Immersed up to the lips
Plotting against the neighbours (31)	Immersed up to the eyebrows
Not hoping in the Lord as a helper (32)	In a bottomless pit with a river of fire poured over them

³⁰) See also Silverstein and Hilhorst 1997:12 and our note 20.

³¹) For a more detailed analysis see Rosenstiehl 1990, to be read with the comments by Hilhorst (1999:128–39).

Priest not executing his office properly (34)	Strangled and having his intestines pierced
Bishop not giving righteous judgments nor having compassion with widows and orphans (35)	Standing up to his knees in river of fire and being beaten by angels
Deacon eating up the bread of the Eucharist and fornicating (36)	Standing up to his knees in river of fire and worms coming out of his mouth
Lector who did not keep God's commandments (36)	Standing up to his knees in river of fire, lips and tongue cut off with a fiery razor
Men and women exacting usury on usury and trusting in their wealth instead in God as their helper (37)	Eaten by worms
Reviling the Word of God (37)	Chewing their tongues
Dispensing magical charms to men and women (38)	Submerged up to the lips in blood
Male and female adulterers (38)	With black faces in a pit of fire
Defiling virginity unknown to the parents (39)	Led into darkness
Harming orphans, widows and the poor (39)	With hands and feet cut off in snow and ice
Breaking the fast (39)	Unable to eat fruit within sight
Associating with adulterers (39)	Hung by their eyebrows and hair in a river of fire
Homosexuality and lesbianism (39)	In a pit of tar and brimstone, running in a river of fire
Pagans giving alms without knowing God (40)	Blind standing in a pit
Not paying attention to the reading of the Scriptures (40)	Being on an obelisk of fire and being torn apart by wild beasts
Aborting women and their lovers (40)	Being strangled in fire
False monks, who neglected the <i>agape</i> , widows, orphans, strangers, pilgrims and neighbours (40)	Clothed in rags of tar and brimstone with snakes around their necks
Denying the incarnation, the Virgin birth and the Eucharist (41)	Burning in a fiery well
Men and women denying the resurrection (42)	Coldness and snow

A comparison with the sins and sinners in the *Apocalypse of Peter* quickly shows some remarkable differences. The sins in that Apocalypse could be reasonably categorised, and they started with a typically Jewish concern for righteousness. In fact, there is not a single reference to a sin amongst them that is exclusively Christian and not Jewish, a character-

istic of the work that is shared by the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, which is found in a Coptic translation but may well go back to the same period as the *Apocalypse of Peter*. It is very different in the *Apocalypse of Paul*, where about half of the 25 types of sins are typically Christian, such as the concern for the clergy or the denying of certain Christian dogmas. Thus the Christian character of this *Apocalypse* is evident. Moreover, the enumeration is more fragmentary and not without doubles. So we hear twice of those lacking compassion with widows and orphans (35, 40), and also twice of adulterers (38–39). In other words, the enumeration shows signs of reworking by an author without great literary skills.

Which sins and sinners were no longer considered worthwhile to mention? It is immediately striking that in comparison with the *Apocalypse of Peter* the categories of apostates, idolaters and persecutors are found no more. Such an omission can hardly have happened otherwise than in the time after the conversion of Constantine the Great.³² In fact, the absence of idolaters suggests that we are already well into the Christian period. The only reference to pagans is to those who gave alms but did not yet know the word of God (40). They have nice clothes (*vestimenta clara*), but are pictured as blind, probably symbolic of their pagan beliefs. It seems clear from this reference that the pagans are no longer considered a serious threat.

Other absences are more puzzling. We now miss false witnesses, disobedient children, disobedient slaves and murderers, and the still Jewish distinction between abortion and exposure is collapsed into one (Himmelfarb 1983:96). Instead, the *Apocalypse of Paul* starts with a series of new crimes all related to the proper behaviour in church and the proper execution of ecclesiastical offices. Somewhat surprisingly, these begin with the priest (34), but in Late Antique Egypt most people lived in villages where the priests and the deacons were the most important clerics (Schmelz 2002:295). The priest is followed by the bishop (35), deacon and lector (36), who, equally surprisingly, receives the severest penalty even though he occupies the lowest rank;³³ it may well be that the author settles here local scores that escape us.

³²⁾ For his conversion process see now Bremmer 2006.

³³⁾ For the *lector/anagnōstēs* in Egypt see Wipszycka 1996:238–48; Schmelz 2002:38–39. In papyri he is not attested before the end of the fifth century.

The priest was absolutely indispensable for the Eucharist, which is mentioned three times here (31, 36, 41);³⁴ its growing importance is illustrated by the fact that, as time went on, even silver plates and cups were sometimes used for its administration.³⁵ Its importance in the monastic milieu is well illustrated by a story of a vision of the priest Piammonas: “Once when he was celebrating the Eucharist he saw an angel standing to the right of the altar. The angel was noting the brethren who came up for Communion and writing down their names in a book. As for those who were not present at the *Synaxis*, he saw their names erased. And in fact thirteen days later these died.”³⁶ Only those who plotted crimes against their neighbours (31) are seemingly not connected to the faith, but this may be due to a mistake of the *Vorlage*, as the sin is lacking in the Syriac translation.

This Christian beginning is followed by a series of sins that already occurred for the most part in the *Apocalypse of Peter* and that spoke to ever urgent Christian and monastic concerns. I explicitly say “Christian and monastic.” A number of the sins are clearly of a general nature but, since the origin of the *Apocalypse of Paul* probably has to be looked for in a monastic milieu, it seems justified also to look for connections with the monastic milieu where this is appropriate. Let us start with the concern for widows and orphans (35, 39, 40). This concern is, of course, already found in the New Testament (Bremmer 1995), and in the second century widows and orphans were prominent enough to visit the philosopher Peregrinus in prison during the Christian period in his life (Lucian, *Peregrinus* 12; cf. Bremmer 2007b); in the fourth and fifth centuries we have so many references to bishops caring for widows and the poor that the references in our *Apocalypse* must have been perfectly understandable and sympathetic to its readers;³⁷ in such a society, where poverty was always around the corner, concern for users and the rich (37) can hardly come as a surprise either.

³⁴) For the Eucharist in Egypt around 400 see Meyer 1989:147–51; for the early and later Eucharist see also Tanner 2001; Basileios 1991.

³⁵) Toynbee and Painter 1986; Basileios and Ishaq 1991; Schmelz 2002:102–3.

³⁶) *Historia Monachorum* 25.2, tr. Russell and Ward 1981:116. See also Vivian 1993:26–30.

³⁷) See the fine pages by P. Brown (1992:71–103; 2002:45–73; Holman 2001); Schmelz 2002:256–59; Finn 2006.

At first sight, the mention of *peregrini*, “pilgrims,” in addition to strangers (40), may look somewhat strange, and influence from the Vulgate can perhaps not be excluded.³⁸ Even though there were early visitors of the holy places in Palestine, more frequent pilgrimage hardly started before Constantine, and the earliest references to *peregrinus* in the meaning of “pilgrim” are not before Jerome. Of course, the main focus of pilgrims was the Holy Land, but Egypt with its holy men was often a second stage in the religious “grand tour” of the Middle East.³⁹ In any case, if the original already contained a reference to pilgrims, the reference can hardly be dated to the earlier third century.

Sex, marriage and virginity had always been Christian concerns, and Peter Brown has given us a wonderful book on this subject that shows how that concern pervaded all layers of Christian society (Brown 1988; see now also Schöllgen 2001). Athanasius shows us the attention paid to virgins and their growing isolation in Egypt. From his writings we can see many a virgin living at home and some parents must have been concerned as to what their daughters would do unbeknownst to them (39), the more so because “tokens of the virginity of the bride” had to be produced by servants from the bridal chamber.⁴⁰

In line with its Jewish ancestry, Christianity had been hostile to same-sex relations since its beginning, and in 390 the first male prostitutes had been burned alive in Rome (*CTh* 9.7.6). We could thus take the mention of gays and lesbians (39), who are also found in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, as a general prescription, but if we contextualise the underlying injunction in a monastic milieu, its mention is perhaps more pressing. Isolated from heterosexual relationships, the temptations of the flesh naturally directed themselves to homosexual ones. This is clear not only from the instructions of Horsiesius and the Pachomian community, but also from the anecdotes about the Desert Fathers

³⁸) Note *advenam et peregrinum* in Leviticus 25.35 (Vulgate). For the importance of hospitality in the monastic world see *Historia Monachorum* 8.55; *Regula S. Benedicti* 53; note also *Visio Beati Esdrae* 31: *advenas et hospites non susceperunt*.

³⁹) Kötting 1980:188–211 (Egypt); and 1988, 2:252–59 (“Koptische Wallfahrten”); Parente 1983:231–316; Hunt 1982:185–89 (Egypt); Elm 1994:273–74 (Egypt); Frankfurter 1998b; Caseau et al. 2006.

⁴⁰) Elm 1994:34–39, 231–32; Brakke 1995:17–79 at 26–28 (virgins living at home). Tokens: Budge 1914:398.

that regularly mention the temptations of pederasty.⁴¹ Nuns were no exception to these attractions of the flesh. Shenoute explicitly says that “those, then, among us or among you [women] who will touch some boys or girls whether they are sleeping or awake and those who touch them that they might know that they are mature, they are accursed whether a man or a woman.”⁴²

Magic (38) is also mentioned by the *Apocalypse of Peter* (12.4–7 E). Once again we can look at this sin in the general context of the time or, more specifically, in the world of the monks. During the course of Late Antiquity the Roman emperors had completely outlawed magic so that in 392 it had become equated with *crimen maiestatis* by Theodosius I (*CTh* 16.10.12.1).⁴³ As such, magic clearly was an actual category. On the other hand, we could perhaps also look at magicians as the competition for the monks. Lives of the Desert Fathers regularly tells us of miraculous feats, such as flying, walking over water or the resurrection from the dead. In other words, the monks became the competition for other miracle workers and may well have supported the suppression of magic for that reason.⁴⁴

On the other hand, an undoubtedly Christian and new sin is the breaking of the fast before the appointed hour (39). Its mention is interesting, as it is one of several references to the world of ascetics and monks that can be found in the *Apocalypse of Paul*. When the angels report to God the deeds of men, they mention people that “wander as strangers and live in a cave of the rocks,⁴⁵ weeping every hour they dwell on earth, and they are hungry and thirsty for the sake of thy name. Their loins are girt, and they hold in their hands the incense of their hearts. They pray and bless at every hour, they are distressed and subdue themselves more than all others who live on earth, weeping and mourning” (9). It is not difficult to recognise in this picture the world

⁴¹ Brown 1988; *Testament of Jacob* 8, ed. K. S. Kuhn; Diebner 2003:1230; Brakke 2006:206–8.

⁴² Shenoute, *De vita monachorum* 21 = Leipoldt, *Sinuthii Archimandritae Vita*, 124; cf. Brooten 1996:349–50; Krawiec 2002:37–38, 42, 148; Wilfong 2002; Brakke 2006:208–9.

⁴³ For the process see Fögen 1993; Neri 1998:258–86; Lotz 2005.

⁴⁴ For the powers of monks see Frankfurter 1998a:267–77.

⁴⁵ This is perhaps a reference to Hebrews 11:38.

of the early Egyptian ascetics, who also seem to be alluded to when an angel mentions ‘those that have not used their power over these things (the world) but went hungry without them and afflicted themselves for the name of the Lord God’ (23). If these are references to individuals, the mention of communal psalm singing (29, 30) points to communities of monks.⁴⁶

This is also the case when the *angelus interpret* explains why men and women were dressed in rags full with tar and sulphur with snakes around them: “They are those who seemed to renounce the world by wearing our raiment,” but then miserably failed in charity (40). The reference is clearly to the white habit of the monks, which reflects that of the angels, the *angelikon schêma*.⁴⁷ Hilhorst and Silverstein recognise that the expression does not occur before the fourth century, and, given their dating of the text to the second and third centuries, find it hard to accept. That is why they suggest that “no one has yet sought instances, earlier or later, of ‘our’ life, ‘our’ habit or costume, meaning ‘angelic’ from context,”⁴⁸ but this is clearly special pleading. Their additional argument that the enumeration of objects of charity (agape, widows, orphans, strangers and pilgrims) suggests people living in their own homes rather than in monasteries is a reasonable one. Yet, even if true, it won’t help their argument. Recent investigations into Egyptian monastic life, based on evidence from Oxyrhynchus and elsewhere, have demonstrated that monastic communities lived in a continuum stretching from houses in towns via monasteries in towns or villages to monasteries in the desert (Goehring 1999:73–88). Surely, the reference to *agapes* (40) and the breaking of the fast “before the appointed hour,” *ante constituta ora* (39: i.e. *ante constitutam horam*), suggest monastic communities, urban or not, with certain rules about fasting, even though Christians also fasted before the rise of the monastic movement (Arbesmann 1969; Shaw 1998). Such communities did not exist before the fourth century.

⁴⁶ For psalm singing monks see *Historia Monachorum* 2.12, 8.48–49; Wipszycka 1996:251.

⁴⁷ *Historia Monachorum* 2.12, 8.19; Theodorus, *Vita Theodosii* 71.23, with Usener *ad loc.*; Schmelz 2002:114.

⁴⁸ Silverstein and Hilhorst 1997:14. Note that Hilhorst (2007:18) now recognises the monks in chapters 30, 39 and 40.

The list of sinners is concluded by those denying Christian dogmas (the incarnation, the Virgin Birth and the resurrection) qualified as sins (41–42). Their enumeration has been taken to suggest the Nestorian conflict (Silverstein 1962). Yet the simple formulations hardly point to the complicated Christological debates of that period, which, moreover, seem to be somewhat too late. On the other hand, later tradition pictured Shenoute as a great opponent of Nestorius (*Vita Sinuthii* 128–29; cf. Hahn 2004:223–24). Perhaps the debates had already thrown their shadows ahead.

With these new sins we have come to the end. When we now look back we can see that the interest of the author has mostly concentrated on matters of religious concern, whereas, in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, more general ethical problems, such as murder or false witnesses, still play a role. Moreover, there is no longer a border drawn against the pagans outside the Church but against those who do not profess the orthodox doctrines. In short, the sins in the *Apocalypse of Paul* define the borders of proper belief, worship and morality for those inside the Church (thus, rightly, Czachesz 2007:131–33). We are well into Late Antiquity with these sins.

3. Punishments

Having looked at the sins and sinners, let us now make a few observations on the punishments of the sinners. When Paul arrives in hell he first sees *fluvium ignis ferventem*, “a river boiling with fire” (31), filled with sinners that have committed not the most serious crimes but clearly are indicative of a tendency to discipline the faithful by stressing the awful consequences of gossiping, slandering and fornicating after the Eucharist, amongst others. The river of fire most likely derives from Plato’s *Phaedo* (114a), which was a great inspiration for imagined hell-scapes in later antiquity.⁴⁹ It is a device of the author of the *Apocalypse of Paul* to let the fire reach different parts of the body, depending on the seriousness of the crime. The choice of fire coming to the lips for those that slandered in the church (31) cannot be fortuitous. The *Apocalypse of Peter* contains many punishments that are based on the principle

⁴⁹ For a good discussion of the “river of fire” see Himmelfarb 1983:110–14.

of measure-for-measure, which is part of a wider Near Eastern pattern, although it was not absent in Greek thought either (Himmelfarb 1983:75 ff.; J. P. Brown 2001:27–30). We find other examples in the men and women that had to chew their tongues for reviling God's Word (37), in the adulterous men and women that were hung by their eyebrows and hair (39), and in the punishment of the lector who did not keep God's commandments and whose lips and tongue were cut off with a fiery razor (36). The latter punishment does not come from the Greeks but eventually derives from the Babylonians and Assyrians. There can be little doubt that they, together with the Persians, were the inventors of the cruellest penalties in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, I have been unable to find there the penalty of the priest who had his entrails pulled out via the mouth (34, version St Gall, one of the two manuscripts of the best Latin version, L¹). Strangely, it is reminiscent of the cruel king Echetos in the *Odyssey* (18.83–87), who cut off nose and ears and pulled out the vitals to give them raw to the dogs — surely a reflection of contemporary Assyrian kings.⁵⁰

The question has been put to what extent the punishments have been inspired by the penalties and tortures of the martyrs and historical reality. Were they mainly inspired by literary tradition or by the historical reality (Czachesz 2007:143)? The question is not that easy to answer. Judicial savagery had gradually risen during the empire and the harshest times began in the late 370s and 380s (MacMullen 1990:204–17, 357–64). From that perspective the contemporaries of the *Apocalypse of Paul* will have been less impressed than we perhaps might think. Many of the punishments are of course mythological, such as all those connected with standing in fire, although the mire, *borboros*, of the Orphic tradition has disappeared, which is still very present in the *Apocalypse of Peter* (Bremmer 2003). Other punishments may have been inspired by the historical experience of the persecutions, which were still very much alive — witness Prudentius' poems on the martyrs (Palmer 1989). For example, cutting off the hands and feet, a punishment for those not caring for widows, orphans and the poor (106), is attested by Lactantius (*Mort. pers.* 36.7). His testimony is typical of the persecutions under Diocletian that were much worse than the previous ones, when

⁵⁰ Rollinger 2004:140 (Echetos), 141 (lips, tongue).

the Romans often just executed the leading martyrs instead of torturing them as well (as observed by Franchi de' Cavalieri 1962, 1:385, 389). On the other hand, the beasts that tore to pieces the men and women who had not paid attention to the Scriptures (40) had been there from the very beginning of the persecutions and were the product of the Roman spectacles.⁵¹

In the end, there are only two instruments mentioned that reflect contemporary instruments of torture. The first is the *ferrum trium angulorum* (34) that was used to draw out the entrails of the priest. This is a reflection of the *ungulae* that were used to scrape the sides of the martyrs and were still in use in the time of Chrysostom.⁵² But the historical ones had only two prongs and were not used to remove the entrails.⁵³ In other words, the *Apocalypse of Paul* has conflated the historical instrument with the trident and given us an exaggerated, if no less gruesome, punishment. The second instrument is the *obeliscum igneum* (40 St Gall) for those, already mentioned, who did not pay attention to the Scriptures. The term is translated in different ways: “stang van vuur” (Hilhorst), which is much more sensible than “fiery pyramid” (Duen-sing and de Santos Otero) and “obelisque de feu” (Kappler), but none is really satisfactory. It should be “fiery spit,” as it is in the *Apocalypse of Peter* (30 G) and in Eusebius’ report of the martyrdom of Polycarp who, significantly, combines them with trumpet shells.⁵⁴

Finally, it is an innovation of the *Apocalypse of Paul* that it introduces a period of respite from these punishments. When Michael, the angels and Paul beg God for mercy, Jesus appears and pronounces: “on the very day on which I rose from the dead I grant to you all who are being punished a day and a night of refreshment forever” (44). In other words, the dead may rest from their tortures and punishment on Sundays. The Coptic version even extends this respite to the fifty days after Easter,

⁵¹ For the *damnatio ad bestias* see now Coleman 2006 *passim*.

⁵² Johannes Chrysostomus, *Contra Iudaeos et gentes quod Christus sit Deus* 10 (Migne PG 48.826).

⁵³ Franchi de' Cavalieri 1962, 2:130 n.3; Vergote 1972:122.

⁵⁴ Eusebius, *HE* 4.15.4 = *Mart. Polycarpi* 2.4. It is perhaps noteworthy that the wild beasts also figure in this passage. Did the author of the *Apocalypse* know the *Martyrium* from readings in the liturgy? For such readings see Urner 1952; de Gaiffier 1961; Palmer 1989:229–32; add *P. Iand.* VIII 154 (a *martyrologos*).

but other translations, such as the Syriac and an Armenian version, clearly have trouble with this idea: apparently, not everybody was happy with this easing of damnation.⁵⁵ The Coptic mention of Easter is perhaps supported by the fact that Prudentius in his *Cathemerinon* (V.125–36) also mentions Easter as a day of respite for the damned (Merkle 1895). The ground for this idea was probably prepared by the fact that the emperors occasionally used Easter as a day for amnesty in the later fourth century.⁵⁶ Now it is generally argued that the idea of the Sunday respite derives from the Jewish idea of a Sabbath rest (Lévi 1892; 1893). This may be true (although the reverse does not seem impossible either), but in any case we should realise that Sunday became a day of rest fairly late in Christianity. This happened only after the rise to power by Constantine, who issued the first of a series of laws on Sundays that gradually turned it into the familiar day of rest.⁵⁷ Yet the Church started to issue orders and exhortations regarding this rest not before the second half of the fourth century.⁵⁸ Once again, then, the text as we have it suggests a later date than previously thought.

4. Conclusion

Hell and the fate of the damned had already been a subject of reflection in early Christianity before the *Apocalypse of Paul*, in works such as in the *Apocalypse of Peter*; however, earlier theological studies and speculations lacked its dramatic power.⁵⁹ Since there was no authoritative version of hell, it could exert such an influence in the East and West that it did not stop with Christianity: even the Zoroastrian *Apocalypse Ardā Virāz* is indebted to it (Tardieu 1985). The *Apocalypse of Paul* is

⁵⁵ Bauckham 1998:149–59 (the idea in Augustine); Roig Lanzillotta 2007:193.

⁵⁶ *CTh* 9.38.3, 8 (367); *Const. Sirmond.* 7 (380); *CTh* IX.38.7 (384), IX.38.8 (385); *Const. Sirmond.* 8 (386).

⁵⁷ Constantine: Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.18–20; *CJ* III.12.2 (321), *CTh* II.8.1 (321). Valens: *CTh* VIII.8.1 = XI.7.10 (368). Valentinianus: *CTh* II.8.18 = VIII.8.3 = XI.7.13 (386).

⁵⁸ Rordorf 1972; Kinzig 2006 (with full bibliography).

⁵⁹ See most recently Rasmussen 1986:449–51; Bernstein 1993; Schäufole 2006. Note that Segal 2004 has disappointingly little to say about hell.

an important stage in the elaboration of hell. It is also a product of a specific place and time, undoubtedly produced for certain needs, even though these are no longer recoverable. Although it is just one of the hell-scapes that were produced by early Christianity, it is the most important step in the direction that would find its apogee in Dante. The disappearance of these Apocalypses with their sadistic punishments is no great loss. Yet is a world where the late Jean-Paul Sartre's "L'Enfer, c'est les autres" dominates always better?⁶⁰

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Voices and Bodies: The Afterlife of the Unborn¹

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Abstract

This article discusses the fate of a special class of child, the unborn, in the afterlife, as well as the gradual criminalization of abortion in Antiquity. Particular attention is paid to a possible prohibition of abortion in Orphism that may underpin the *nekyiai* in P. Bon. 4. and Vergil *Aen.* 6. Then it turns to depictions of the aborted in the *Apocalypse of Peter* and its late antique offspring to show how the aborted fetus gradually acquires a visible body and an articulate voice. At the same time, the theology of sentiment works out its solutions to mitigate the problem of the innocent in hell. The fate of the almost bodiless fetus in the Resurrection became a bone of contention by the early 5th C. The satirical questions posed Christians about the resurrection of the unborn may first have been raised by Porphyry. His interest in the embryo and its ensoulment in the *Pros Gauron* are adduced as evidence. Attention is drawn to Augustine's doubts about the status and fate of the human embryo, and some reasons are suggested about why he hesitated to adopt an unambiguous "human from conception"

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position. In the 5th C., after the Pelagian controversy, attention began to shift from the unborn to the unbaptized, who dominate the *nekyiai* of the Middle Ages. The rise of the Mizuko kuyō cult in Japan shows astonishing parallels to what happened in Late Antiquity.

Keywords

fetus, abortion, hell, resurrection, Christianity, Orphism

Sunt autem dis iuvantibus colore satis salubri, clamore forti. Panem alter tenebat bene candidum, ut puer regius, alter autem cibarium, plane ut a patre philosopho prognatus... nam etiam vocolas quoque eorum audiui tam dulcis, tam venustas, ut orationis tuae lepidum illum et liquidum sonum nescio quo pacto in utriusque pipulo adgnoscerem.

Frontonis epistulae ad M. Antoninum imperatorem 1.3.2.23

Megan: Maybe just the sound of children...

Jim: What?

Randall: The sound of children?

Megan: I was just thinking that you'd get a greater sense of the absence of children if you heard them, but didn't see them.

Wendy Macleod, *The Water Children*, 22

Introduction

The “unborn” could include Adam, and both the miscarried and the aborted, likewise those yet to be born.² But I will confine myself to the aborted. This problematic subset of a subset, namely the aborted unborn in the afterlife, has to a large extent (unlike the *ahorī*) remained neglected in the secondary literature. This paper is not about abortion in antiquity, but about cultural conventions governing the depiction of children in the afterlife and about the times when, and ways in which, a specially disembodied class of child develops a voice and a body in the afterlife. Although the conference was about the uses of hell, I shall also discuss the problem of the fetus at the Resurrection. As will become clear, the souls and bodies of the unborn did indeed have uses — as much in Late Antiquity as now.

²) As in Strauss' “Die Frau ohne Schatten.”

Classifying Children

Propter cunam capulum pistum nutrix tradit pollicitori
Varro, *Menippeae* fr. 222 Astbury (from the *Cosmotoryne*)

The ancients, collectively, had a sophisticated classification of children according to age that involved very different ritual and legal statuses. The Romans assigned different rights and appurtenances and indeed different tutelary deities to different stages of childhood.³ The most important boundary for a citizen boy came with the donning of the *toga virilis* and for the girl with marriage. But there were also the sub-distinctions: the *infans* that could not yet speak, the *puer* or *puella* that could.⁴ And then a phase before the speaking threshold: the *dies lustricus* at eight or nine days.⁵ Distinctions mattered for dead children too: the child who has yet to be named,⁶ the child under forty days old who could be buried inside the *pomerium*, indeed at the edge of the house (Néraudau 1987:196),⁷ and then all children, who were regularly buried at night (ibid. 199). Children were an important subset of the

³ For the latter see Augustine, *Civ. D.* 4.11 *ipse sit Diespiter, qui partum perducit ad diem; ipse sit dea Mena, quam praefecerunt menstruis feminarum; ipse Lucina, quae a parturientibus invocetur: ipse opem ferat nascentibus, excipiendo eos sinu terrae, et vocetur Opis; ipse in vagitu os aperiat, et vocetur deus Vaticanus: ipse levet de terra, et vocetur dea Levana; ipse cunas tueatur, et vocetur dea Cunina: non sit alius, sed ipse in deabus illis, quae fata nascentibus canunt, et vocantur Carmentes: praesit fortuitis, voceturque Fortuna: in diva Rumina mammam parvulo immulgeat, quia rumam dixerunt veteres mammam; in diva Potina potionem ministret; in diva Educa escam praebeat: de pavore infantum Paventia nuncupetur; de spe quae venit, Venilia; de voluptate Volupia; de actu Agenoria; de stimulis, quibus ad nimium actum homo impellitur, dea Stimula nominetur, Strenia dea sit, strenuum faciendo; Numeria, quae numerare doceat; Camoena, quae canere: ipse sit et deus Consus, praebendo consilia; et dea Sentia, sententias inspirando: ipse dea Iuventas, quae post praetextam excipiat iuvenilis aetatis exordia: ipse sit et Fortuna Barbata, quae adultos barba induat; quos honorare noluerunt, ut hoc quaecumque numen saltem masculum deum, vel a barba Barbatum, sicut a nodis Nodutum, vel certe non Fortunam, sed quia barbas habet, Fortunium nominarent: ipse in Iugatino deo coniuges iungat; et cum virgini uxori zona solvitur, ipse invocetur, et dea Virginiensis.*

⁴ Aug. *Conf.* 1.8 *non enim eram infans, qui non farer, sed iam puer loquens eram.*

⁵ Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.16.36 *est autem dies lustricus quo infantes lustrantur et nomen accipiunt; sed is maribus nonus, octavus et feminis.*

⁶ The *puer nominandus*. See Dittenberger in *IG* 7.690 on tombstones from Boeotia.

⁷ Also, Ariès (1973:39) on the persistence of the custom among the Basques.

ἄωποι, and their deaths have attracted considerable attention, particularly from epigraphers, who analyze epitaphs, and literary scholars, who work from many sorts of texts.⁸ There has been a flurry of concern about whether the ancients really loved their children and whether they cared when their children died.⁹ And answers have differed.¹⁰

Abortion Before Christianity

Abortion was rarely problematized in mainstream Greco-Roman culture.¹¹ The fetus was considered a vegetative *zoom*, but not *empsychos*¹² (not animal as such) — hence not a human being; it was legally part of its mother till born.¹³ Stoicism was particularly influential here.¹⁴ As early as Plato and Aristotle a distinction was drawn between the formed and the unformed fetus.¹⁵ Abortion was rarely criminalized and then

⁸) E.g. Vrugt-Lentz 1960; Lattimore 1962; Griessmair 1966; Vêrilhac 1978, 1982; Wiedemann 1989; King 2000.

⁹) King 2000; Golden 1988. Wiedemann 1989:11: “This should not lead us to assume that men like Marcus did not love their children.” Ibid. 42: “The evidence of inscriptions is far too scanty and too atypical to function as some sort of opinion poll of what parents thought about their children. But it confirms the largely negative picture which emerges from literature and philosophy: pagan Romans had a substantially less romantic view of bringing up children than recent generations of Europeans.” Passages such as Plutarch, *Cons. ad Apoll.* 113d and Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.93 occasioned worry.

¹⁰) Golden (1988:154) mentions the theory that demography governs emotional responses and that parents in antiquity were hardened to the loss of children.

¹¹) Orphism, as we shall see, may have been an exception. For abortion in antiquity, Nardi 1971 is fundamental.

¹²) Arist. *Gen. anim.* 2.34–36, with Waszink 1954:178.

¹³) *Digest* 35.2.9.1 *partus nondum editus homo non recte fuisse dicitur. Digest: 25.4.1.1 partus antequam edatur mulieris portio est vel viscerum.*

¹⁴) See Waszink 1947:298; Salmon 1999:56. Nardi (1971:319 n.18) rightly argues that Epictetus, *Diss. ab Arriano digestae* 2.22.28 οὐδὲ τὸ ἀκρατεῖς καὶ μοιχοὺς καὶ φθορεῖς ἀπεργαζόμενον refers to sexual corrupters, not abortion-procurers. Musonius Rufus, *Dissertationum a Lucio digestarum reliquiae* 15 τὸ δὲ ἔχειν παῖδας καὶ νῆ Δία πολλοὺς ἔχειν εἶναι λυσιτελεῖς; τοῦτο μὲν γὰρ ἀμβλίσκειν ἀπεῖπον ταῖς γυναιξὶ καὶ ταῖς ἀπειθούσαις ζημίαν ἐπέθεσαν, τοῦτο δ' ἀτοκίᾳ προστίθεσθαι καὶ τὴν κύησιν εἶργειν ἀπηγόρευσαν αὐταῖς, τοῦτο δὲ πολυπαιδίας ἔταξαν γέρα καὶ ἀνδρὶ καὶ γυναικί, καὶ τὴν ἀπαιδίαν ἐπιζήμιον κατέστησαν argues on civic and practical grounds, not moral or medical ones.

¹⁵) For Plato, see *Tim.* 91D ὥς εἰς ἄρουραν τὴν μήτραν ὁράτα ὑπὸ μικρότητος καὶ ἀδιάπλαστα ζῶα κατασπεύραντες and for Aristotle, see Dölger 1934:7–9.

only for married women who could be seen as depriving their husbands of heirs (Crahay 1941). Any concept of “right to life,” as we call it, came strictly from the Hellenistic Judaic and eventually Christian tradition, which eventually, by categorizing the fetus as a living ensouled human being, would condemn women who had abortions or those who helped them to do so.¹⁶

Christianity and Abortion

With the coming of Christianity, the drawing of distinctions in life and death extended even to the child before birth (fetus or embryo). It was now not just a question of whether an embryo was formed or unformed, but of how it came to be terminated, whether by miscarriage or by abortion, and of whether it had ever been an animal. These medical and legal questions naturally intersect with the assignment of eschatological blame. Was someone responsible for the fetus’ death? What was the state of the unborn child’s soul? Where did they go? Why? What do their fates tell us? And, since the uses of hell are at issue, how were they used?

Children in the Afterlife

The theology of sentiment¹⁷ revolts at the idea of children in any bad place. And there is a minority of epitaphs and epigrams that worry about the little one facing the darkness of Hades.¹⁸ And a few texts that console by imagining the child at its childlike play in the paradise of the *ahori*.¹⁹

¹⁶ For Hellenistic Judaism see Pseudo-Phokylides vv. 184–85 prohibiting abortion and exposure: μηδὲ γυνὴ φθείρη βρέφος ἔμβρυον ἔνδοθι γαστρός/ μηδὲ τεκοῦσα κυσὶν ῥίψη καὶ γυνὴν ἔλωρα in Van der Horst 1978:100 with notes at 232–34. For the position of the modern Vatican, see “*Humanae Vitae*,” at <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_v/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae_en.html>.

¹⁷ Phrase borrowed from A. Graf 2002:172.

¹⁸ Martial, *Ep.* 5.34 *Paulula ne nigras horrescat Erotion umbras/ oraque Tartarei prodigiosa canis. . . . Inter tam veteres ludat lasciva patronos/et nomen blaeso garriat ore meum*. For an unusual classical Greek visual depiction, see Neils et al. 2003:173–74: a boy with his toy roller-cart confronting the bark of Charon.

¹⁹ See Cumont 1949:324; and 1942:345, fig. 76, and 346: “Un bambin ou une fillette pourrout ainsi s’amuser, comme ils le faisaient dans leur brève existence, et on

But these are rare and later developments.²⁰ When there is only one place to go, the children needs must go there too, but early on they are simply not mentioned or depicted there.²¹ As soon, however, as there is a good place, in addition to a bad or undifferentiated one, that is where children should (and do) go.²²

Scope

This paper will, (1) starting with the first known Christian depiction of the aborted, in the afterlife in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, re-examine arguments used to support an alleged Orphic prohibition of abortion; (2) compare the Greek and Ethiopic versions of the *Apocalypse of Peter*; (3) turn to a different question about the fate of aborted, namely their resurrection, in pagan-Christian polemic; (4) make some more general diachronic observations about the afterlife of the unborn with a coda pertaining to the modern period.

Orphism and Abortion?

The first unequivocal appearance of the unborn in the afterlife is in the 2nd century CE Greek version of the *Apocalypse of Peter* (*Akhmim* 5).

And there sat women who had blood (or pus [*ichor*]) up to their necks and opposite them many children who had been born *ahoroi* sitting wept. And rays of fire

leur donnera naturellement pour compagnon de jeux le dieu toujours enfant qu'est Éros." For the roses equated with the children, one should compare Prudentius, *Cath.* 12.125–32 (with its imitation in Sermo Caillaut-Yves 2.5 *Iam laetentur... parvuli rosas delibare novelli sanguinis*) and, of course, the *De rosis nascentibus*. Barcellona (1974:713) points out the tiredness of the repetitious plant imagery in the sermon. A teenage girl who had been affianced, but not married would be buried with her doll and its kit. See Milano, Museo di 1982. I owe this reference to the vigilance of Nicholas Horsfall.

²⁰ I find none, for example, in all of the many Greek epigraphic sepulchral poems in Vèrilhac 1978, 1982. Griessmair (1966:49–50) nods to the Hellenistic spirit in grave inscriptions for children, but has little relevant material.

²¹ But then texts such as the OT and Homer have little interest in children as agents and hence no interest in their moral status.

²² The Greco-Roman pagan world does not seem to have suffered from “limbs of Satan” or “evil seed.”

went out from them and struck the women in the eyes. They were the unmarried women who had become pregnant and had abortions.²³

But was this indeed, as is commonly supposed, their first appearance? To research this problem we must return to some important, but largely forgotten 19th century scholarship that had argued for “Orphic” prohibitions of abortion before the Christian period. Their findings, the development of their arguments, and some unexpected new evidence make an interesting story that needs to be united in one place.

Aen. 6.426–29 is the starting point for my discussion of about how scholars have employed source-critical methodologies to reconstruct lost religious texts by a process of triangulation:

Continuo auditaē voces vagitus et ingens
infantumque animae flentes in limine primo
quos dulcis vitae exsortes et ab ubere raptos
*abstulit atra dies et funere mersit acerbo.*²⁴

Immediately there were heard voices and a great wailing and the weeping souls of infants on the first threshold whom, having no part in sweet life and snatched from the breast, a dark day took away and drowned in a bitter death.

In the traditional interpretation these are the *ahoroi*, who died before their time and are condemned to live out the 100-year term of their natural life on the wrong bank of the Acheron.²⁵ In 1906, however, Salomon Reinach suggested a very bold reinterpretation.²⁶ He noted that these children come just before a very different category of unhappy souls, those falsely condemned to death and suicides, who threw away their lives (*proiecere animas*). The latter two types of dead are the *biaio-*

²³) Translating *Apocalypsis Petri* 5 from Dieterich 1893:6.

²⁴) Cf. *Aen.* 11.143, and Néraudau 1987:198–99 on the *funus acerbum*.

²⁵) If so, they would be doubled in *Aen.* 6.329 of the ἄταφοι. Also Servius, *In Aen.* 4.386 *Dicunt physici biothanatorum animas non recipi in originem suam, nisi vagantes legitimus tempus fati impleverint*. Tertullian, *De anima* 56–57 argues against the pagan position that the souls of *ahoroi* are forbidden entrance to the underworld until they have lived out what ought to have been their time on earth. Clement and Methodius put them in the custody of a guardian angel for 100 years. See Reinach 1906:315.

²⁶) See Reinach 1906:314. It is unclear whether Maass (1895:265 n.36) is making the same point. The expression “unnatürlichen Todes” suggests that abortion may be what he had in mind.

thanatoi, “killed by violence.” He suggested that the children in Vergil were aborted children, likewise violent deaths, and argued that Vergil had used a now lost Orphic source.²⁷ For the Orphics, according to Reinach, unlike most other Greeks, condemned abortion, suicide, and masturbation,²⁸ all of which wasted vital essence.

Shortly before Reinach wrote, in 1895, Erwin Maass had suggested that the *Apocalypse of Peter* contained ideas that were direct descendants of an Orphic eschatology in which aborted children blinded their mothers in hell. He triangulated back to such a concept from Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* 185 ff., where Apollo tells the Furies:

οὔτοι δόμοισι τοῖσδε χρίμπεσθαι πρέπει,
 ἀλλ’ οὐ καρανιστῆρες ὀφθαλμωρύχοι
 δίκαι σφαγαί τε, σπέρματός τ’ ἀποφθορᾷ
 παίδων κακοῦται χλοῦνις, ἡδ’ ἀκρωνίαί
 λευσμοί τε, καὶ μύζουσιν οἰκτισμὸν πολὺν
 ὑπὸ ῥάχιν παγέντες.

It is not right for you to approach this house; no, your place is where the punishments are beheading, gouging out of eyes, cutting of throats, and where young men’s virility is ruined by destruction of seed; where there is mutilation and stoning, and where those who are impaled beneath their spine moan long and piteously. (Trans. Smyth and Lloyd-Jones 1957, adapted slightly)

But where *should* the Furies go? The modern consensus is Persia, the barbaric place where such punishments were rife (Lloyd-Jones 1970:22; Sommerstein 1989:114). And how should one interpret the obscure δίκαι σφαγαί τε, σπέρματός τ’ ἀποφθορᾷ / παίδων κακοῦται χλοῦνις? Χλοῦνις is a hapax that must be assigned a meaning contextually. It is usually translated as “virility” — hence “young men’s virility is ruined by destruction of seed.” But that in turn is an inadequate translation of παίδων, “children,” and, if it is indeed children, then this is not punitive, but commercial castration (Hendry 1998). A recent solution is to

²⁷) Nardi (1971:228–29) denies any reference to the aborted.

²⁸) Reinach’s argues for masturbation on the basis of Gellius, *NA* 4.11.10 interpreting Empedocles fr. 141 Diels, κυάμων ἀπὸ χειρὸς ἔχεσθαι. Gellius claims that some people say the “beans” are testicles, and he wanted *a rei veneriae proluvio voluisse homines deducere*. It is not quite clear to me that Gellius meant masturbation, though his phraseology might include it.

see the punishment as castration and to translate, “where by destruction of the seed the (new-made) eunuch is prevented (from making) children” (ibid.).

Maass, however, thought Apollo meant hell, and emended to δίκαι σφαγαί(ς) τε, σπέρματός τ’ ἀποφθοραί(ς), “punishments for murders and for the destroying of the seed,” and lined up beheading as punishment for murder and blinding as the punishment for abortion.²⁹ There are problems with his argumentation.³⁰ But there are also problems with the passage as commonly interpreted. It sounds rather feeble to have Apollo tell the Eumenides, “Go to — Persia.” And the presence of *leusmos*, stoning, does not fit a purely barbarian environment.³¹ Furthermore, as Dölger pointed out, ἀποφθορά had carried a technical sense of “miscarriage,” since Hippocrates.³²

It is not for me to adjudicate the issue, but simply to resuscitate this intriguing tidbit of neglected scholarship,³³ for its attempt to reconstruct an early *testimonium* to the Orphic underworld has been ignored. Reinach’s interpretation of *Aeneid* 6 likewise sank virtually without trace only to be miraculously revived by the discovery of what has commonly been called an “Orphic” *katabasis* on papyrus in the late 1940s that seems to have listed a woman who had had an abortion among the denizens of hell (P. Bon. 4). I discuss the complicated question of its text in the Appendix below. The apparent condemnation of abortion in P. Bon. 4 has been diversely ascribed to the influence of Orphic traditions and to (as we shall see) the influence of Hellenistic Judaism (Setaioli 1970:217).

I steer clear of the current controversy surrounding ancient Orphism, viz. whether there ever was a pagan religious system of that name that

²⁹) Waszink (1950:56) disputes the interpretation, citing Wilamowitz-Moellendorf 1914:217 arguing for castration. See West 1983:12 for Aeschylus’ *Bassarids* and acquaintance with Orphic theories about hell.

³⁰) For example his failure to justify the need for his emendation. Also, even if the results of blinding and eye-gouging are the same, they are different procedures, and the children in the *Apocalypse of Peter* are not gouging out eyes.

³¹) Sommerstein (1989:114) notes that it is odd to see stoning listed amongst barbarian customs, since it was a Greek one.

³²) Dölger 1934:17, who however sees no need for an Orphic underworld here.

³³) See Graf and Johnston 2007:58 for an assessment of this “somewhat renegade student of Wilamowitz.”

anticipated various key doctrines of Christianity, whether it had known doctrines, rites, and canonical texts, or indeed any sort of objective existence, or whether “Orphism” served as a catch-all for various fringe doctrines and was a construct of both ancient and 19th century scholars.³⁴ The *nekyia* in the Bologna Papyrus has regularly been considered “Orphic” because it details punishments for sins, and because a *katabasis* of Orpheus is attested (West 1983:9–10; Brisson 1990:2915). The presence of punishments (as opposed to a Sheol-like half-life) has often been used as a diagnostic criterion for Orphic ideas.³⁵ The problem goes back to debates between analyst and unitarian critics of *Od.* 11. Are *Od.* 11.569–627 an interpolation representing a different and later Greek thought-system?³⁶ Or do they represent not later or alien seed but a different, but contemporary form of thinking? Some scholars of Orphism do not discuss the Bologna *nekyia* (e.g. West 1983; Brisson 1990; Edmonds 2004), and may not consider it “Orphic.” Others, e.g. Bernabé, include it in the textual canon of Orphism. Whether its apparent inclusion of a woman who had had an abortion is “Orphic” or not is less important for my argument than its date. I am less interested in alleged precedents for key Christian doctrines about the soul than in the moment when discussion about such issues emerged in any context whatsoever.

Possible Hellenistic Judaic antecedents are supported by a variant in Exodus 21:22–23, where the Hebrew text invoked the death penalty against anyone who struck a pregnant woman and caused her to miscarry and die. Miscarriage alone entailed a fine to the husband. Jerome’s Latin rendered it faithfully as:

Si rixati fuerint viri, et percusserit quis mulierem praegnantem, et abortivum quidem fecerit, sed ipsa vixerit: subiacebit damno quantum expetierit maritus mulieris, et arbitri iudicant. Sin autem mors eius fuerit subsecuta, reddet animam pro anima, oculum pro oculo, dentem pro dente, manum pro manu, pedem pro pede, adustionem pro adustione, vulnus pro vulnere, livorem pro livore.

³⁴) For a clear discussion of these issues, see Edmonds 2008, and also Edmonds 2004:37–46.

³⁵) See the cautious Friedrich Solmsen (1968:9).

³⁶) The analyst viewpoint goes back to Aristarchus. For bibliography, see Heubeck and Hoekstra 1988:111.

The LXX exhibits an important adjustment, however:

ἐὰν δὲ μάχωνται δύο ἄνδρες καὶ πατάξωσιν γυναῖκα ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσαν, καὶ ἐξέλθῃ τὸ παιδίον αὐτῆς **μὴ ἐξεικονισμένον**, ἐπιζήμιον ζημιώσεται· καθότι ἂν ἐπιβάλῃ ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς γυναικὸς, δώσει μετὰ ἀξιώματος· ἐὰν δὲ **ἐξεικονισμένον ᾦν**, δώσει ψυχὴν ἀντὶ ψυχῆς, ὀφθαλμὸν ἀντὶ ὀφθαλμοῦ, ὀδόντα ἀντὶ ὀδόντος, χεῖρα ἀντὶ χειρός, πόδα ἀντὶ ποδός, κατακάυμα ἀντὶ κατακάυματος, τραῦμα ἀντὶ τραύματος, μώλωπα ἀντὶ μώλωπος.

A distinction is drawn between the formed and unformed fetus. The penalty structure, a fine for the miscarriage of an unformed fetus and death for that of the formed one, clearly shows that a formed fetus was regarded as alive (and a human being) by the Jews of Hellenistic Alexandria. But strictly speaking this text tells us about penalties for accidental manslaughter, not for abortion. But other texts show us that Hellenistic Judaism condemned the practice.³⁷ The “smitings of embryos in the womb” featured in the 2nd–1st cent. BCE Book of Enoch.³⁸

Waszink saw no reason to read the *Aeneid* as Reinach had.³⁹ He was right. One does not *have* to. *Ab ubere* presents a real impediment.⁴⁰ And the text makes sense as it is — except that the *ahori* are then duplicated.⁴¹ But the words used are ambiguous, and *in limine primo* does not *have* to refer to the children’s birth, but could refer to their conception or to the *primum limen* of Hades.⁴² I would like to put in a word for Reinach’s interpretation of Vergil with a few additional considerations that could support an ambiguous, richer, more interesting reading. If

³⁷ A view confirmed by Ps-Phocylides (above n.16). For more on Alexandrian Judaism and abortion, see Dölger 1934:20–23.

³⁸ *Enoch* 69.12 in Charles 1913:234. Men are taught the art by the fallen angel Kasdeja.

³⁹ Waszink 1950:57. Sam Wide (1909:233) went further: “ganz aus der Luft gegriffen.”

⁴⁰ *Ab ubere raptos* is a standard expression, *uber* specifically meaning “breast.” Reinach read it as if it were a euphemism for “womb,” like the French “sein.” See Turcan (1956:151) for “mamelles” vs. “matrice.” Schilling (1982:370) also comments on the vagueness of the expression.

⁴¹ See *Aen.* 6.307–8 *pueri innuptaeque puellae/impositique rogis iuvenes ante ora parentum*. Though Vergil seems to have forgotten about these *ahori* by 6.325, where he identifies the whole group as the unburied.

⁴² Norden (1926:245) construes it progressively *apo koinou* with *vitae*, but mentions the other possibility.

we accept his basic idea, we get a meaningful sequence of classes of *biaiothanatoi*, not what Dieterich called a “failed experiment” on Norden’s part in combining the *aoroi* with the *biaiothanatoi*.⁴³

Vergil had reason to be sensitive to the deaths of children, both born and unborn.⁴⁴ And arguably too to ones that wouldn’t be.⁴⁵ Augustus had notorious problems with his succession.⁴⁶ Later on in *Aeneid* 6 Vergil would mourn the death of the young Marcellus, Augustus’ prospective heir.⁴⁷ He had lavished all the riches of his art on paradisiac praise of the birth of an anonymous child in the 4th (Messianic) *Bucolic* (Nisbet 1978; Norden 1958). Here he may unforgettably have given an inarticulate voice⁴⁸ to these specially disembodied spirits at the vestibule of the underworld. They never really had bodies. And in a later partially parallel text are likewise depicted as wails alone.⁴⁹ The treatment

⁴³ Norden (1894) tried to defend himself against the criticism of Dieterich (1893:152 n.2). The latter said “I consider it a failed experiment to wish to categorize the classes of children, suicides, etc. amongst the *aoroi* and the *biaiothanatoi* who, as is well known, were so significant, then as now, in magic.” But in so doing and in comparing Lucian’s *Kataplous* 5 he identified what Lucian explicitly called the ἐκτιθείμενοι (exposed) with the *aoroi*. And ἐκτιθείμενοι could equally be viewed as *aoroi biaiothanatoi*.

⁴⁴ On this topic see now the intriguing study of the lost children in the *Aeneid*, Newman and Newman 2005.

⁴⁵ See *Aen.* 4.327–28 for the *parvulus Aeneas* that Dido would not bear. Also *Aen.* 1.712–19 for her fantasy about Ascanius. The anticipated *puer* of *Buc.* 4 was never born.

⁴⁶ Suet. *Aug.* 63.1–65.4 on his problems of succession. He had no sons that survived, only the Elder Julia by Scribonia and a premature child by Livia. The Younger Julia was relegated in 8 AD and her child not raised. See Suetonius, *Aug.* 65.4 *ex nepte Iulia post damnationem editum infantem agnoscere alique vetit*. Salmon (1999:59), citing Sid. Ap. *Carm.* 23.158–61, where Corinna is identified as *Caesarea puella*, raises the intriguing question of Augustus’ distaste for the abortion of a possible relative (Ovid, *Am.* 2.13); Newman and Newman (2005:11–12), however, point to the marked contrast between Augustus’ social policy and his murders of children who were potential rivals. It was this “sick reality” rather than “the glitter of public pomp and pious aspiration which the vatic poet has chosen to depict in his epic.”

⁴⁷ *Aen.* 6.863 ff. Son of Octavia (Augustus’ sister), married to the Elder Julia in 25 BC; probably Augustus’ heir designate; died in 23 BC. See now Severy 2003:68–69.

⁴⁸ One might compare now the choruses of unborn children both in Richard Strauss’s *Der Rosenkavalier* and in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*.

⁴⁹ *De Genio Socratis* 22 590F μυρίων δὲ κλαυθμὸν βρεφῶν. All the dead are reduced to voices, but the wailing of children is specially listed.

in Vergil is extremely restrained and tactful.⁵⁰ What could be more emblematic of what have been called his *lacrimae rerum*?⁵¹ One could contrast the brutal language of the satirist Juvenal who called abortions “lumps,” *offas*, probably an allusion to early term abortion before the fetus was formed.⁵²

Thus both Reinach and Maass independently put pre-Christian texts (Vergil and Aeschylus) side-by-side with the *Apocalypse of Peter* to argue back to a common Orphic *nekyia* that may have depicted the punishment of women who had sought abortions by their children (Maass) as well as the aborted (Reinach) themselves. The date of the putative source is unclear. It was identified as “Orphic” because Orphic thinking supposedly introduced punishments for classes of sinners in hell to Greek eschatology.⁵³ Orphism is supposed to have condemned suicide; its condemnation of masturbation is far from proven. Reinach’s and Maass’ work hangs closely together with Dieterich’s, because the latter had argued that the *Apocalypse of Peter* essentially recast a pagan *nekyia* as a Christian one (Dieterich 1893:230–31).

While other interpretations of the Aeschylus passage fail to convince, so likewise does Maass’. The brilliant (and erratic) Reinach⁵⁴ has a better case, but still an unproveable one. As we have seen, Vergil may well have been thinking of aborted children, but only as part of a group that included the neonate *ahori* and possibly also the *ektithemenoi*, both of whom could be described as *ab ubere rapti*. The Bologna papyrus included a woman who had had an abortion amongst its sinners, but its text does not clinch the question. For although Vergil clearly had an

⁵⁰ Turcan (1956:154–55) points out the discretion and sympathy of Vergil who focuses on the victims. He was, however, also capable of using the language of abortion (with a plausible pun and a conceptual inconcinnity [Juno advocating abortion]) about a treaty. See *Aen.* 12.158 *conceptum excute foedus* with Newman and Newman 2005:13.

⁵¹ I allude to a popular reading of *Aen.* 1.462, not the precise “tears spent on things.” Now this concept is more likely to be called “the poetry of pathos.” See Conte 2007.

⁵² Juvenal 2.32 *cum tot abortivis fecundam Iulia vulvam/solveret et patruo similes effunderet offas*.

⁵³ See Dieterich 1893:73–83 for the mud of hell, the punishments attested in Plato, and the *Apocalypse of Peter*. Also, above p. 335.

⁵⁴ One of the three “frères Je Sais Tout,” on whom see now Basch, Espagne and Leclant 2008.

ancestor of its *nekyia* in front of him,⁵⁵ one cannot prove that he had seen the section about the abortion (P. Bon. 4.1–4). The date of the *katabasis* transmitted in the Bologna papyrus as the *katabasis* itself remains unresolved. While the papyrus dates to the 2nd/3rd century AD, it merely provides a *terminus ante quem*. Its condemnation of abortion could date to the Christian period. Nonetheless, the presence of crying infants in both Vergil and Plutarch suggests their presence in some lost Greek *nekyia*, “Orphic” or not. In short, the strong eschatological condemnation of abortion in the *Apocalypse* may have antecedents in pre-Christian texts, possibly even “Orphic” ones, but there can be no certainty as yet.⁵⁶

So both later Judaism and possibly Orphism provide antecedents for the Christian prohibitions. While Greek and Romans saw the unborn in the womb as happily vegetative, biblical texts painted a different picture. In Luke 1:41 John leaps in the womb, and in Gen 25:22 the twins struggle there (Strack and Billerbeck 1924:100–101).⁵⁷ Also no doubt relevant was Ps 8:3 ἐκ στόματος νηπίων καὶ θηλαζόντων κατηρτίσω αἶνον, quoted at Matt 21:16 Ναί· οὐδέποτε ἀνέγνωτε ὅτι Ἐκ στόματος νηπίων καὶ θηλαζόντων κατηρτίσω αἶνον; and its exegesis.⁵⁸

⁵⁵) It is now generally agreed that its close relationship to the *Aeneid* is best explained by a shared common Greek source, not by either using the other. Horsfall 1993.

⁵⁶) Dieterich (1893:158) had likewise guessed that the fate of children had been discussed in Orphic *nekyiai*.

⁵⁷) There is a parallel in the *adynata* of 4 Ezra 5.8 (Charles 1913:570): “And one year old children shall speak with their voices; pregnant women shall bring forth untimely births at three or four months, and these shall live and dance (reading *scirtiabuntur*). And suddenly shall the sown places appear unsown, and the full storehouses shall be suddenly found empty.”

⁵⁸) See Ps.-Justin Martyr, *Quaestio* 13, p. 399A.5 Μαρτυρεῖ δὲ τούτοις τὰ τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ Ἰωάννου ἐν τῇ κοιλίᾳ τῆς μητρὸς τῆς ἀγαλλιᾶσεως σκιρτήματα καὶ ὁ ὕμνος τῶν νηπίων καὶ θηλαζόντων and Clement, *Eclogae* 49.2 καὶ ἐν <τῷ εὐ>αγγελίῳ «τὸ βρέφος ἐσκίρτησεν» ὡς ἔμψυχον; also Epiphanius, *Homilia in festo palmarum*, PG 43.436.54 εἶτα τί περὶ τῶν παίδων τούτων λέγεις; τί περὶ ὕμνου τῶν θηλαζόντων νομοθετεῖς; τίς, εἰπέ μοι, τούτους ἐφώτισε.

Doctoring the Apocalypse of Peter

I'd like now to return to the Greek *Apocalypse of Peter*:

And there sat women who had blood (or pus [*ichor*]) up to their necks and opposite them many children who had been born *ahoroi* sitting wept. And rays of fire went out from them and struck the women in the eyes. They were the unmarried women who had become pregnant and had abortions. (5)

and draw attention to the fact that the children are no longer, as in Vergil, disembodied, even though abortions are explicitly mentioned.

The Ethiopic version (ch. 8) is different and exhibits greater precision and elaboration and also a greater degree of explicit Christianization:⁵⁹

Near this flame there is a great pit... a fetid abomination.... The women will be mired up to their necks and will be punished with a great punishment. These are precisely those who aborted and destroyed the work that the Lord had formed. **Opposite there is another place**, where their children, whom they prevented from living will be sitting. They will cry to the Lord. Lightning will come from these children, a bolt in the eyes of those who caused their ruin by this fornication. (Marassini 1997:765)

The Ethiopic version alone (ch. 8) then continues:

Higher up other men and women will stand naked and their children will face them **in an exquisite and delicious place**. They will sigh and call out to the Lord because of their parents. "These are they who neglected, cursed, and transgressed your commandment and caused us to die.... They refused us the light that you gave to all"... as for the children, they will give them to a guardian angel. (Marassini 1997:765)

⁵⁹ The precise relationship between the Greek and Ethiopic versions is unclear. The current consensus seems to be that both derive authentically from one source. The Ethiopic is not a straightforward translation of the Greek. See Bremmer 2005:6 and 12, where latterly he suggests that the Ethiopic dropped the original Orphic *borboros* of the Greek. Absolute dating is not crucial to my argument. The Ethiopic shows variations that *must* be ancient, because they also show up in Clement's *Eclogae Propheticae*. See Buchholz 1988:23–27 for the Ethiopic text's preservation of the angel Temelouchos.

These last are the men and women who exposed their children.⁶⁰ They are naked, while their children “in a place of delight”⁶¹ accuse them before God. Methodius of Olympus actually gives them words: “They summon their own parents by name boldly into the court of Christ, accusing, ‘You did not deny us, O Lord, this light common to all. These people cast us out to death, despising your commandment’” (*Sympos.* 2.6). The *Apocalypse of Peter’s* condemnation is picked up by the late 4th century Latin *Visio Pauli*, where the children directly address God, saying, “The countenances of our parents are wicked, for they stained God’s creation. Having the name of God, but not observing his commandments, they gave us as food for the dogs and for pigs to tread on, others they threw into the river.”⁶² The children are then handed over to the angels of Tartarus who lead them to a “spacious place of mercy.”⁶³

First we should observe the tactics of intimidation that give increasingly vivid voices, bodies, and powers to the aborted and exposed in these evolving popular religious texts. In the Greek *Apocalypse of Peter* the aborted — appropriately — have *inarticulate* cries and shoot rays from their eyes.⁶⁴ In the Ethiopic version appear the exposed children too, who (perhaps more realistically) have *articulate* voices. These are developed further into a virtual courtroom scene in Methodius of Olympus. The latter is based on applying Wisd 4:6 “For children born of unlawful unions are witnesses of evil against their parents when God examines them” to the aborted too.⁶⁵ One might point also to the old

⁶⁰ Note the historical accuracy. The father had *patria potestas* over the life of a born child, and must have participated in the decision to expose it.

⁶¹ *Visio Pauli* 40.3 *Infantes autem illi traditi sunt angelis Tartari qui erant super poenas, ut ducerent eos in locum spatiosum misericordiae.*

⁶² *Visio Pauli* 40.3, Carozzi 1994:240 *Defende nos a genitoribus nostris. Ipsi enim commaculaverunt plasma dei, nomen dei habentes, sed precepta eius non observantes dederunt nos in escam canibus et in conculcationem porcis, alios proiecerunt in flumine. Commaculantes plasmam dei* expresses the words of *Didache* 2.2 φθόρις πλάσματος θεοῦ. The *Visio Pauli* is derived from the Greek original of the Ethiopic version of the *Apocalypse of Peter*.

⁶³ *Infantes autem illi traditi sunt angelis tartari qui erant super penas, ut ducerent eos in locum spatiosum misericordiae.*

⁶⁴ Like the Furies in an “Orphic” Hymn. See Dieterich 1893:62.

⁶⁵ Ἐκ γὰρ ἀνόμων φησὶν ὕπνων τέκνα γεννώμενα μάρτυρές εἰσι πονηρίας κατὰ

rhetorical trick of bringing children into the courtroom.⁶⁶ That crying! On which more anon —.

These texts address an evident moral and theological problem — that the aborted children had not been baptized, yet clearly — to anyone with a sense of justice — did not deserve to suffer in hell, since they had committed no personal sin.⁶⁷ The role of the victim in the punishment of the sinner in hell is a pagan survival that has not yet been fully naturalized (or better exorcized). Thus the Greek *Apocalypse of Peter* depicts the aborted as actual instruments of punishment for their mothers in hell, without any concern for the location of the children themselves.

The Ethiopic version, however, remedies the problem by relocating them to “another place.” In the case of the exposed children, it specifies that it is “exquisite and delicious.” This is a situation familiar from Luke 16:23 (Dives and Lazarus), that the saved can somehow mysteriously see the damned, to implement the confrontation between aborted or exposed child and parent.⁶⁸ We might also bear in mind the possibility that somewhere behind this may be the pleasure allegedly afforded the righteous by the contemplation of the tortures of the damned.⁶⁹ And the *Visio Pauli*, which is dependent on the ancestor of the Ethiopic *Apocalypse*, puts the children into the custody of the angels of Tartarus

γονέων ἐν ἐξετασμῷ. Note however that its original application was to the children of fornication or adultery, who eventually survived. The Vulgate is Sap. 4:6 *ex iniquis enim omnes filii qui nascuntur testes sunt nequitiae adversus parentes in interrogatione sua*. Greg. Tur. *DLH* 2.1 and *Vita Goaris* 7 (*MGH SRM* 4) contain examples of infants denying and attesting episcopal paternity.

⁶⁶ See Kassel 1991:64 on *Wasps* 976, where Bdelykleon asks, ποῦ τὰ παῖδιά.

⁶⁷ See Dieterich 1893:62: “... in dieser Hölle, in die sie doch auf keine Weise gehören.” Also Waszink 1947:566 on the role of sentiment and the desire to split the *abori* and the *biaiothanatoi*. See Dölger 1930:34–37 for the revolt of “natürlicher Gefühl.”

⁶⁸ Dives is in hell and Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom. Himmelfarb (1983:96) notes a common feature of punishment for abortion/infanticide is that the children are present to accuse their parents.

⁶⁹ Ps-Clement, *Ep.* 2.17.7 οἱ δὲ δίκαιοι εὐπραγῆσαντες καὶ ὑπομείναντες τὰς βασάνους καὶ μισήσαντες τὰς ἡδυπαθείας τῆς ψυχῆς, ὅταν θεάσωνται τοὺς ἀστοχῆσαντας καὶ ἀρνησαμένους διὰ τῶν λόγων ἢ διὰ τῶν ἔργων τὸν Ἰησοῦν, ὅπως κολάζονται δειναῖς βασάνοις πυρὶ ἀσβέστῳ, ἔσονται δόξαν διδόντες τῷ θεῷ αὐτῶν λέγοντες, ὅτι ἔσται ἐλπίς τῷ δεδουλευκῷ θεῷ ἐξ ὅλης καρδίας. Also Tertullian, *Spect.* 30, and, surprisingly, Greg. Nyss. *De infantibus* in Downing, McDonough and Hörner 1972:66.1, citing Ps 57:11.

until they are taken to the “spacious place of mercy.”⁷⁰ The later text emphasizes the hypocrisy of the Christian parents, who thought their misdeeds could remain secret.⁷¹ Later witnesses in Ethiopic focus on the abortion of *nuns* and hence suggest a clerical context.⁷² Here the embodiment of the disembodied child is used to inspire fear and implement social control, and in some cases pity. Audiences seem to vary: perhaps general, eventually clerical, and perhaps even women. These early popular texts made no bones about depicting the aborted and the exposed in the afterlife. But they are exceptional (Czachesz 2005:21). As are much later texts such as Alberic of Montecassino’s *Visio*, which goes a step further in trying to account for the presence of the unborn accusing their mothers — they are demons who impersonate them.⁷³

⁷⁰ So does Methodius of Olympus, *Symp.* 45, working from Matt 18:10.

⁷¹ *Visio Pauli* 40.3, Carozzi 1994:240. Himmelfarb (1983:73) emphasizes the secret nature of sexual sins.

⁷² Ethiopic *Apocalypse of Baruch* (71–72) in Leslau 1951:71: “Many men were suspended from them, and serpents of fire and dogs of fire devoured them. I said to him, ‘Who are these who undergo this terrible punishment?’ He said to me: ‘Priests and † (my obelus) widows who, being pregnant, drank medicines to kill the conceived being. The killed beings cried unto God saying: ‘O Lord, O Lord, we might have been good or bad, but they did not let us grow; some of us were eaten by dogs, others by beasts.’ God ordered that the children be given to Temeleyakos; as for their parents they undergo this punishment.’” Leslau (1951:169) notes: “The limitation to widows is probably wrong.” I wonder whether it shouldn’t be “nuns” to match the priests. There are other examples of nuns punished for abortion, e.g. in the Ethiopic *Apocalypse of Mary* (Chaine 1909:65 ed. [my translation of the Latin]): “And I also saw other people hung in the midst of flames. Serpents of fire attacked them and ate them, and dogs of flame bit them, and fiery lions broke their legs, and fiery leopards were rending their throats. And when I saw this I wept bitterly and asked my son. ‘Who are these (m.)?’ And he answered me and said, ‘These are nuns who transgressed the canon of the law. After they had put on the monastic habit, they soiled their virginity. . . . And often after their children had been conceived they killed them in the womb, spilled their blood upon the ground, or killed their children after giving birth to them. Or the children’s fathers gave abortifacients to the mothers with their own hands. But the children cry out before the throne of my father and say, ‘Lord, they did now allow us to live to do either good or ill. They gave part of us to the dogs and threw the other part before the pigs.’ And when we had heard the words of these children, I with my father and with the Paraclete were saddened and I ordered the angel Temeliaqos to set them down in a beautiful dwelling. But for their fathers and mothers, this is their eternal punishment.”

⁷³ See Alberic of Monte Cassino, *Visio* 6 p. 89 *Inguanez in eisdem vero incendiis*

The Resurrection of the Unborn

... hinc omnis pullulat aetas,
 pullulat antiqua mortuorum pulvere turba.
 matres atque viri repetita luce resurgunt,
 magnanimi iuvenes, pueri innuptaeque puellae
 defunctique senes animis viventibus adstant
 infantumque gemens resonat vagitibus orbis.
 Anon. *Carmen de resurrectione* 159–64 (ed. Waszink 1937)

Plato (*Rep.* 615c), quite possibly ironically, repressed what Er had to say about the *ahori* in the Pythagorean afterlife, as οὐκ ἄξια μνήμης. And most seemed to have followed the letter of his dismissal as regards hell. But there was another place too. I'd like to turn now to a mirror image of the question about the bodies of the unborn. In their debates with pagans about the Resurrection Christian intellectuals had to respond to a derisively enunciated question.⁷⁴ Pagans had pestered apologists about the resurrection of bodies that had drowned, and been eaten by fishes, beasts, birds, worms, or, of course, been burned.⁷⁵ And Christians on the defensive had to respond preemptively even in their own positive expositions.⁷⁶

comburentur mulieres pessime suorumque homicide viscerum. Que quibusdam facinoribus vel medicaminibus suos interficiunt antequam nascantur filios aut aliquo ingenio aborsos eos faciunt, quique ante ipsas stantes dicunt, 'vos vestris impietatibus vitam nobis et salutem auferentes ad christianitatem venire non sivistis'. Licet autem ipsi infantes filii earum esse videantur, non tamen ipsi sunt, set sunt maligni spiritus in eorum se figura ostendentes. The text is published in Inganez 1932.

⁷⁴ *Civ. D.* 22.12 ita quaerendo adsolent irridere [so these must be pagan opponents] *utrum fetus abortivi resurgent... si enim aequalitas erit corporum, unde habebunt quod hic non habuerunt in mole corporis abortive, si resurgent et ipsi?*... and they reiterate the same question *de parvulis unde mensura corporis, quam nunc defuisse videmus, accedat cum in hac aetate moriuntur.* Jerome, *Ep.* 108.23–25, however, suggests similar questions from heretics.

⁷⁵ Already in Min. Fel. *Oct.* 11.4; A sample can be found in the pagan *quaestiones* posed Macarius Magnes. See Harnack 1911:92–93 = *Monogenes* 4.30.17 (Goulet 2003, 2:353). Also in Ps. Justin, *Quaestiones gentilium ad Christianos* 15, p. 330 Otto. These are attributed to Diodorus of Tarsus by Adolf von Harnack (1901).

⁷⁶ See, for example, *Carmen ad Flavium Felicem de resurrectione* 113–121 *si quem forte rogis abolevit flamma sopitum,/ aut aliquem caecis deiecerat aequor in undis,/ si cuiusque famem satiarunt viscera piscis,/ aut fixere ferae crudelia funera membris,/ alitibus iacuit*

The inevitable follow-up to the question of devoured bodies was, “Would aborted fetuses be resurrected?” The first explicit Latin attestation of this debate about the resurrection of the unborn comes rather late, namely in Augustine.⁷⁷ He addressed the issue in two separate works.⁷⁸ But what are the origins of this derisive question? It may have come from Porphyry, Augustine’s great opponent in the *City of God*, perhaps from the *De regressu animae*, or more probably from the *Kata Christianon*.⁷⁹

As we have seen, *quaestiones* about the resurrection were “out there,” real Christian-teases, not something Augustine excogitated on his own. In *Ep.* 102 appear eight questions (the first one on the Resurrection) put to Deogratias by an anonymous pagan querent, and answered by Augustine in 409. Deogratias believed the questions Porphyrean,⁸⁰ even if Augustine eventually came to think not (*Retr.* 2.31). So Porphyry was associated with a Latin *quaestio* about the resurrection put to Augustine. So far this leg of my argument from convergence.

Porphyry and the Embryo

A little-read treatise called the *Pros Gauron*, on how embryos are ensouled, is transmitted as Galen. But in 1906 Karl Kalbfleisch edited it for the first time, and proved, quite brilliantly, that it is almost certainly the work of Porphyry (Kalbfleisch 1895). The tract staunchly defends the Platonic-Stoic position that the embryo is first ensouled at birth. It is notable for its use of *reductio ad absurdum* and satirical riffs, e.g. on the theory that the heavy breathing of the male during the

raptato corpore sanguis, / ultima nec Domino negabunt funera quemquam, / adparere Deo vivos de morte necesse est / resumptisque suis homines adstare figuris (Waszink 1937:69–70).

⁷⁷ Wrongly regarded as pure *curiositas* by Marrou (1938:472).

⁷⁸ See below at 000.

⁷⁹ See Harnack 1916; Beatrice 1919. More recently Berchman 2005, with extremely unclear criteria for what constitutes a fragment. Also Beatrice 2005:164 on some of the difficulties in working out which treatises of Porphyry treated what topics and what larger works they may have been part of. The use of titulature that could be substitulature (“On Statues,” “Against the Christians,” “On the Return of the Soul”) contributes to the problem.

⁸⁰ *Ep.* 102.2.8 *Item alia proposuerunt, quae dicerent de Porphyrio contra Christianos tamquam validiora decerpta* is slightly ambiguous. Does it include *Quaestio* 1 or not?

sexual act draws in a soul from the air and push it through the penis into the womb and imprisoning it, conception being compared to the capturing of a bird (*PGaur.* 2.3). One passage in particular is of interest. In *PGaur.* 11.1 Porphyry says the following:

Ἐμβαίνει δὲ ὁ κυβερνήτης εἰς φῶς προ(ε)λθούσ(ης) τῆς φύσεως μετὰ τοῦ ἔργου <οὐκ> ἀναγκαζόμενος. καθάπερ δ' ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις (ἑώρ)α(κ)α, οἱ τὸν Προμηθέα μιμούμενοι κειμένου τοῦ πλάσματος τὴν ψυχὴν ποιεῖν ἀναγκάζονται (ε)ἰ(σ)δύνειν εἰς τὸ σῶμα, τῶν παλαιῶν ἴσως διὰ τοῦ μύθου οὐκ ἀνάγκην παραστήσαι βουλομένων τῆς εἰσκρίσε(ως), ὅτι δὲ μετὰ τὴν κύησιν καὶ πλασθέντος τοῦ σώματος ἡ ἐμψύχωσις παριστάντων μόνον· ὃ δὲ καὶ ὁ τῶν Ἑβραίων θεολόγος σημαίνειν ἔοικεν, ὅταν πεπλασμένου τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου σώματος (καὶ) ἀπειληφότος πᾶσαν τὴν σωματικὴν δημιουργίαν ἐμφυσῇσαι τὸν θεὸν αὐτῷ εἰς ψυχὴν ζώσαν λέγῃ τὸ πνεῦμα. οὐτ' οὖν ἀναγκαζομένη ἡ αὐτοκίνητος ψυχὴ εἴσεισιν εἰς τὰ σώματα οὐτ' ἔτι μᾶλλον ἐπιτηρο(ύ)σα τὸ στόμα καὶ τὰς ῥίνας, τὰ καταγέλαστα δὲ ταῦτα ἃ καὶ λέγων ἄν τις αἰσχύνοιτο, ἐφ' οἷς τινες τῶν Πλατωνικῶν σεμνύνονται.

Once the being (= child) has entered the light, after the deed (= birth),⁸¹ the pilot boards without, however, being forced. Not as I saw in the theatre, those who play Prometheus are forced to make the soul enter the body, while the protoplast lies stretched out [on the ground]. But the ancients perhaps did not intend to establish by this myth that the entry of the soul is a matter of compulsion, they simply established that the animation takes place after birth and when the body has already been fashioned. The Hebrew *theologos* seems to have signified this too, when, after man's body had been formed and after it had received all physical molding, the deity is said to have breathed *pneuma* into him for living soul. Thus the self-moving soul does not enter the body under constraint, and certainly not spying out the openings of the nostrils and the mouth, a completely ridiculous idea that one blushes to believe, but which certain Platonists are pompous about.⁸²

While the idea of Porphyry at the theatre is intriguing (and a fine Roman sarcophagus depicts what he may have seen; Turcan 1968), there are several basic points to take away from the treatise. 1. Although it is not an anti-Christian work, it uses pointed and satirical argument to prove that the fetus was not animated until after birth. 2. The passage examined adduces Gen 2:7 (potentially embarrassing for Christians), showing that Porphyry had thought about biblical proof texts in

⁸¹⁾ The phrase is slightly obscure and unparalleled in Porphyry.

⁸²⁾ For the only published translation (into French) see Festugière 1953:285.

relation to ensoulment.⁸³ 3. A possible fragment of Porphyry's *Kata Christianon* from Macarius Magnes shows him jeering about another Christian embarrassment, the Incarnation, using gynecological language.⁸⁴ 4. Porphyry's protreptic *Letter to Marcella* 32–33 also contains embryonic analogies — this time for the relationship between soul and body. The language and thought, shared features, could suggest the identity of the authors.⁸⁵

εἰ μὴ τὸ σῶμα οὕτω σοι συνηρτῆσθαι φυλάξεις ὡς τοῖς ἐμβρύοις
κυοφορουμένοις τὸ χόριον καὶ τῷ σίτῳ βλαστάνοντι τὴν καλὰμην, οὐ γνώσῃ
σεαυτήν· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄλλος ὅστις μὴ οὕτω δοξάζει ἑγὼν ἑαυτόν. ὥσπερ οὖν τὸ
χόριον συγγίγνεται⁸⁶ καὶ ἡ καλὰμη τοῦ σίτου, τελεωθέντα δὲ ῥίπτεται

⁸³) See *De antro* 10 διὰ τοῦτο λέγων καὶ τὸν προφήτην εἰρηκέναι ἐμφέρεσθαι ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος θεοῦ πνεῦμα for another allusion to Genesis.

⁸⁴) Macarius Magnes, *Monogenes* 4.22: Εἰ δὲ καὶ τις τῶν Ἑλλήνων οὕτω κοῦφος τὴν γνώμην, ὡς ἐν τοῖς ἀγάλμασιν ἔνδον οἰκεῖν νομίζειν τοὺς θεοὺς, πολλῶ καθαρώτερον εἶχε τὴν ἔννοιαν τοῦ πιστεύοντος ὅτι εἰς τὴν γαστέρα Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου εἰσέδω τὸ θεῖον, ἔμβρυόν τε ἐγένετο καὶ τεχθὲν ἐσπαργανώθη, μεστὸν αἵματος χορίου καὶ χολῆς καὶ τῶν ἔτι πολλῶ τούτων ἀτοπωτέρων. “If any of the Hellenes is so foolish as to think that the gods live in statues, is the view of the one who believes that the divine entered the womb of Mary the virgin and became an embryo and, once born was swaddled, full of blood, natal membrane, and gall, and many even more repulsive things, is this much purer?” See Goulet 2003, 2:312–13 (text) and 427 (commentary). Goulet 2003, 1:131–33 discusses the uncertainty about and the different natures of the different alleged fragments of Porphyry's *Contra Christianos*. At 286 he notes a (slight) parallel in Julian's *Ep.* to Photinus 90. At 134 he suggests that all contact with Porphyry was secondhand, but at 135 concludes that Porphyry remains the best candidate. Van der Horst (2006:185–86) considers Porphyry a crucial ingredient of the pagan cocktail concocted by Macarius.

⁸⁵) It is very close to the Pythagorean *sententia* 106, published by Henry Chadwick (1959:92–93): ὑπολάμβανε τὸ σῶμα οὕτως σοι συνηρτῆσθαι, ὡς τοῖς ἐμβρύοις κυοφορουμένοις τὸ χόριον καὶ τῷ σίτῳ βλαστάνοντι τὴν καλὰμην. ὥσπερ οὖν τὸ χόριον συγγινόμενον οὐκέτι ζῶου μέρος οὐδὲ τὸ ἄχυρον καὶ ἡ καλὰμη τοῦ σίτου (τελειωθέντων γὰρ ῥίπτεται ἑκάτερον), οὕτω καὶ τὸ συναρτώμενον ψυχῇ σπαρείσῃ σῶμα οὐ μέρος ἀνθρώπου· ἀλλ' ἵνα μὲν ἐν γαστρὶ ὑπομένη τὸ βρέφος, προσυφάνθῃ τὸ χόριον καὶ τὸ αἷμα καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ τῆς ἐν τῷ χορίῳ σπηδεόνης, τὸ δὲ ἐκ τούτων ἐξιὼν κεκαθαρμένον· οὐδ' αὐτὸς οὖν ἕκαστος τὸ μετὰ σώματος ἐν κόσμῳ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς κυοφορούμενον, τὸ δὲ ἐξιὼν καὶ ἀναχωροῦν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὸν στείραντα καὶ καταπέμψαντα πατέρα. For Porphyry and the Pythagorean *sententiae*, see Chadwick 1959:141–48.

⁸⁶) Des Places (1982:124 and 161) emends to συγγίγνεται from συγγενόμενον.

ἐκάτερα, οὕτω καὶ τὸ συναρτώμενον τῇ ψυχῇ σπαρείσῃ σῶμα οὐ μέρος ἀνθρώπου. ἀλλ' ἵνα μὲν ἐν γαστρὶ γένηται, προσυφάνθῃ τὸ χόριον, ἵνα δὲ ἐπὶ γῆς γένηται, συνεζύγῃ τὸ σῶμα.

Unless you understand that your body is connected to you like the *chorion* to the embryo in the womb and the stalk to the sprouting grain, you will not know yourself. Nor does anyone else, unless he thinks this, know himself. As the membrane is formed along <with the fetus> and the stalk of the grain <with the grain>, but both are torn off, when they are perfected, thus too the body that is attached to the soul that has been sown, is not part of the man. But, in order that he may be born in the womb, the membrane is woven on to him; so that he may be born on earth, the body is joined <to him>.

Porphry may thus be the senior polemical Platonist who is most likely to have added this uncomfortable question to the standard one about bodies eaten by animals.⁸⁷ There are other possible smoking guns.⁸⁸

Augustine on the Resurrection

Augustine tackled the resurrection of the fetus twice: first in the *Enchiridion* of 421, and subsequently in the *City of God* 22 (of 426). In the *Enchiridion* we find a bolder treatment, where Augustine was more ready to draw fine distinctions: the unformed *fœtus* cannot be said to have lived, because it had never been born. It had perished, as did a seed that never germinated. The stillbirth, however, was another matter, and Augustine's initial reaction⁸⁹ was that it should be counted among the number of the dead.⁹⁰ In the *City of God* he has come to sit the

⁸⁷ See Macarius Magnes, *Monogenes* 4.24 in Harnack 1911:93.

⁸⁸ Aug. *Civ. D.* 22.12 and *Retr.* 2.31. For Augustine's general acquaintance with Porphyry, see Berchman 2005:38–39. There is a possible link between Aug. *Trin.* 11.2 on how fetuses are affected *in utero* by what their mothers see (he cites Gen 30:37–41 where Jacob works genetic engineering on Laban's sheep) and *PGaur.* 5.4, which discusses sympathetic reactions *in utero*.

⁸⁹ *Ench.* 23.85 *Unde primo occurrit de abortivis fœtibus quaestio, qui iam quidem nati sunt in uteris matrum, sed nondum ita ut iam possent renasci. Si enim resurrecturos eos dixerimus; de iis qui iam formati sunt, tolerari potest utcumque quod dicitur: informes vero abortus quis non proclivius perire arbitretur, sicut semina quae concepta non fuerint?*

⁹⁰ He tentatively raises the question of perfectibility with *Ench.* 12.85 *Sed quis negare audeat, etsi affirmare non audeat, id acturam resurrectionem, ut quicquid formae defuit impleatur? Atque ita non desit perfectio, quae accessura erat tempore, quemadmodum non erunt vitia quae accesserant tempore: ut neque in eo quod aptum et congruum dies allaturi*

fence,⁹¹ and never mentions the unformed fetus: “Just as I dare not affirm that aborted fetuses which, although they had already lived in the womb, died there, will rise again, so likewise do I not dare to deny it.”⁹² It is worth noting that Porphyry’s views are mentioned at the very end of *Civ. D.* 22.12.⁹³ So there are new arguments to identify the author of the *quaestio* about fetuses as Porphyry.⁹⁴

fuert, natura fraudetur; neque in eo quod adversum atque contrarium dies attulerant, natura turpetur; sed integretur quod nondum erat integrum, sicut instaurabitur quod fuerat vitiatum.

⁹¹ For his retreat, see Wermelinger 1986:9.

⁹² *City of God* 22.12 *ita quaerendo adsolent irridere* [so these must be pagan opponents] *utrum fetus abortivi resurgent... si enim aequalitas erit corporum, unde habebunt quod hic non habuerunt in mole corporis abortive, si resurgent et ipsi?... and they reiterate the same question de parvulis unde mensura corporis, quam nunc defuisse videmus, accedat cum in hac aetate moriuntur.* Then follows the problem of reconciling Luke 21:18 *Amen dico vobis capillus capitis vestri non peribit* and Eph 4:3 *in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis* and Rom 8:29 *Quos praedestinavit conformes <feri> imagines filii sui.* Further *reductiones ad absurdum*: what about the hairs the barbers cut off? Nails? Body weights? Will they all be the same? ... *consectantur etiam...* If we say that none of these flaws will be resurrected they think that they will refute our answer by citing the locations of Christ’s wounds which we say the Lord Christ rose with. *Quaestio difficillima*: what of the flesh eaten by cannibals? *City of God* 22.13, which continues: “Although I do not see how the resurrection of the flesh cannot apply to them, unless they are removed from the total of the dead. For either not all the dead will be raised, and there will be some human souls without bodies forever that had human bodies, though it was in their mothers’ wombs; or, if all human souls receive their bodies they had as they rise again, wherever they left them living and dying, I do not see how I can say that whatever people died, even in the wombs of their mothers, cannot have a part in the resurrection of the dead.”

⁹³ *Utrum ergo illi redeat homini cuius caro prius fuit, an illi potius cuius postea facta est, ad hoc percontantur, ut fidem resurrectionis illudant: ac sic animae humanae, aut alternantes, sicut Plato, veras infelicitates falsasque promittant beatitudines; aut post multas itidem per diversa corpora revolutiones, aliquando tamen eam, sicut Porphyrius, finire miseras, et ad eas nunquam redire fateantur; non tamen corpus habendo immortale, sed corpus omne fugiendo.*

⁹⁴ The one explicit Greek example I have been able to unearth is Pseudo-Justin Martyr, *Quaestiones et responsiones ad orthodoxos*, *Quaestio* 13, p. 20, 399A (ed. Otto) Εἰ γίνεται ἡ ἀνάστασις διὰ τὴν τῶν βεβιωμένων ἐκάστῳ ἀντίδοσιν, πῶς τὰ βρέφη ἢ καὶ τὰ ἐν γαστρὶ τελευτήσαντα περιττῶς οὐκ ἀνίστανται, οὐτ’ ἔργων ἀμοιβὰς κομιζόμενα οὐτε ἀνέσεως ἢ θλίψεως διὰ τὸ τῆς ἡλικίας ἄωρον λαβεῖν δυνάμενα αἰσθησιν; Ἀπόκρισις. Τῷ πιστεύοντι ἀληθὲς εἶναι τὸ Σπείρεται ἐν ἄσθενείᾳ, ἐγείρεται ἐν δυνάμει, τοῦτ’ ἐκ δυνάτον καὶ πρέπον ἐστὶ τὸ πιστεῦναι καὶ τῶν βρεφῶν

Special Considerations, Fortuna, and Transformation

Augustine a Special Case?

My findings suggest that it is overstatement to claim that from the start Christianity considered the fetus a living being from conception (Salmon 1999:69). Augustine is a major agonized and agnostic counter-example.⁹⁵ And one could speculate quite productively (if intrusively) on why that might be. One might begin with the fact that he was in a 15-year relationship, where he had only one child, who, he claims, came unwanted.⁹⁶ One could consider his Manichean past and his assertions about their non-productive sexual practices.⁹⁷ One should also examine his sensitivity to the plight of children and the freedom of their will. There was something in him that refused both to have children suffer for acts of which they could in no sense be guilty (e.g. his response about the children who wailed when fed sacrificial meats in *Ep.* 98.1 and 3), while there was also something that was not ready to create a limbo or a purgatory. He was thus compelled to argue to Victor that Perpetua's Deinocrates must have committed a sin such as apostasy, rather than acknowledging — as was no doubt the case — that the seven year old simply hadn't been baptized.⁹⁸ There was thus probably personal history behind his refusal to commit himself on the unborn.

τὴν ἀνάστασιν. Ὅ γὰρ τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν αὐτοῖς παρέχων δύναται καὶ τὴν αἰσθητικὴν τῶν προσόντων ἀγαθῶν χαρίσασθαι αὐτοῖς δύναμιν. Ὡς εἰ μὴ γίνεται ἀνάστασις, εὐρεθήσεται ὁ θεὸς μάτην πλάσμενος αὐτά· εἰ δὲ μάτην ποιεῖ ὁ θεὸς οὐδέν, ἀνάγκη ἄρα καὶ τὰ βρέφη εἰς τὸ εἶναι παραγενέσθαι διὰ τῆς ἀναστάσεως. Πῶς δ' οὐκ ἄκαιρον τὸ πρὸς τὴν ἐκδίκησιν τῆς τῶν βρεφῶν ἀναιρέσεως κατακρί- νειν τὸν Ἡρώδη, τῶν βρεφῶν οὐκ ὄντων τῶν ἐκδικουμένων; Μαρτυρεῖ δὲ τούτοις τὰ τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ Ἰωάννου ἐν τῇ κοιλίᾳ τῆς μητρὸς τῆς ἀγαλλιάσεως σκιρτήματα καὶ ὁ ὕμνος τῶν νηπίων καὶ θηλαζόντων. It is of a much later date than Justin.

⁹⁵ For his numerous doubts and hesitations one can go to texts such as Augustine, *De anima et origine eius* 1.25; *Qu. in Heptateuch* 2.80.

⁹⁶ *Conf.* 4.2.2 *pactum libidinosi amoris, ubi proles etiam contra votum nascitur, quamvis iam nata cogat se diligi.*

⁹⁷ On which see Wermelinger 1986:6–7.

⁹⁸ *De an. et eius origine* 3.9.12 *Dinocrates autem septennis puer, in quibus annis pueri cum baptizantur, iam symbolum reddunt, et pro se ipsi ad interrogata respondent, cur non tibi visus fuerit baptizatus potuisse ab impio patre ad gentilium sacrilegia revocari, et ob hoc fuisse in poenis, de quibus sorore orante liberatus est, nescio.*

But there was also the Pelagian controversy. It is clear from *Retr.* 1.15.2 (on *de duabus animabus contra Manichaeos*) that Augustine was to regret his formulation *nusquam scilicet nisi in voluntate esse peccatum*, because the Pelagians could use it to defend their views on the innocence of unbaptized infants.⁹⁹

Some Neutral Voices

And there are other *testimonia* that deny a resurrection to the fetus or acknowledge abortion in surprising contexts. For example Eusebius on Ps 57.8 *et ad nihil devenient tamquam aqua decurrens*, where he compares the future of sinner to the that of the fetus. Neither will have any part in the resurrection.¹⁰⁰ A late antique consolatory letter¹⁰¹ and early medieval hagiographical texts refer neutrally to abortions¹⁰² and one

⁹⁹) *Item quod dixi, 'nusquam scilicet, nisi in voluntate esse peccatum,' possunt Pelagiani pro se dictum putare, propter parvulos, quos ideo negant habere peccatum quod eis in baptismate remittatur, quia nondum arbitrio voluntatis utuntur.* I owe this helpful point to Charles Brittan.

¹⁰⁰) Eusebius, *Comm. in Psalm* 57.8 v. 23.528.34 Πρὸς τούτοις οὖν καὶ τάδε πείσονται· ὁ πάλαι πρότερον τὸ ἑαυτοῦ τόξον ἐντείνων, βάλλων τε καὶ ἀναιρῶν ἑτέρους ὥσπερ βέλεσι τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ λόγοις, οὗτος ἐν τῷ τῆς κρίσεως καιρῷ θορυβηθήσεται, καὶ τὰ βέλη αὐτοῦ δι' ὧν ἠκόντιζε καὶ ἀνῆρει πολλοὺς, θρυπτόμενα ἀφανισθήσεται. Εἴθ' ὥσπερ χωρίον προχωρήσαν ἀπὸ γυναικὸς, οὐδεμιᾶς μετέχει ζωῆς, διαλυθὲν δὲ διαφωνεῖ· ἢ ὥσπερ τὸ ἐν τῷ χωρίῳ ἐναποθανὸν ἔκτρωμα, προελθὸν τῆς κατὰ γαστρὸς αὐτὸ φερούσης, οὐδεμιᾶς μετέχει αἰσθήσεως εἰς τὸ ἀπολαῦσαι φωτὸς καὶ ἡλίου· οὕτως οἱ ἄσεβεις καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ οἱ διὰ τῶν προλεχθέντων δηλωθέντες ἔσονται. Τὸ μὲν γὰρ σῶμα αὐτοῖς διαλυθὲν ὁμοίως χωρίῳ, φθορᾷ παραδοθήσεται, ἐλπίδα τῆς μετὰ τῶν ἁγίων ἀναστάσεως οὐχ ἔξον· ἢ δὲ ἐν τῷ σώματι ὥσπερ ἐν χωρίῳ συνειλημένη αὐτῶν ψυχὴ ἐκτρώματι γυναικὸς ὁμοιωθήσεται, μήτε ζωῆς, μήτε φωτὸς, μήτε ἡλίου αὐγῶν ἀπολαύουσα, ἀπὸ σκότους δὲ ἐπὶ σκότος χωρήσει· καὶ οὔτε ἐν χώρᾳ ζώντων ἀναληφθήσεται, οὔτε εὐαρεστήσει τῷ Κυρίῳ ἐν φωτὶ ζώντων·

¹⁰¹) Jerome, *Ep.* 66.3.3 to Pammachius on the death of Paulina: *crebris abortiis et experta fecunditate conceptuum non desperat liberos.*

¹⁰²) Fortunatus, *Vita Germani Parisiensis: Beatus igitur Germanus Parisiorum pontifex, territorii Augustodunensis indigena, patre Eleutherio, matre quoque Eusebia, honestis honoratisque parentibus procreatus est. Cuius genitrix, pro eo quod hunc post alterum intra breve spatium concepisset in utero, pudore mota muliebri cupiebat ante partum infantem extinguere: et accepta potione ut abortivum proiceret, dum nocere non posset, incubabat in ventre, ut pondere praefocaret quem venena laedere non valerent. Certabat*

depicts a saint actually procuring a miraculous bloodless one for a woman consecrated to virginity.¹⁰³

From Unborn to Unbaptized

Sheila Kitzinger, a British social anthropologist who studies pregnancy and child-birth has written, “The sound of a crying baby . . . is just about the most disturbing, demanding, shattering noise we can hear.” The United States military has reportedly used the sound of wailing infants as an instrument of psychological stress, piping recordings of their cries into the cells of detainees at Guantánamo Bay. (Groopman 2007:47)

I’d like to end with the crying voices that are common to so many of our texts and with a medieval transformation of the aborted in hell. As we shall see, in a purely Christian world, after the Pelagian controversy, the attention devoted the unborn is largely transferred to the unbaptized.¹⁰⁴ There is a remarkable story in Guibert de Nogent’s *De vita sua* 18 where his mother saw her husband’s illegitimate child, who had died unbaptized, weeping bitterly in purgatory. The dead father must tolerate the sound.¹⁰⁵ She adopted an orphaned child to free her husband’s

mater cum parvulo, renitebatur infans ab utero: erat ergo pugna inter mulierem et viscera. Laedebatur matrona, nec nocebatur infantia: obluctabatur sarcina, ne genitrix fieret paricida. Id actum est, ut servatus incolumis, ipse illaesus procederet, et matrem redderet innocentem. Erat hinc futura praenoscere, ante fecisse virtutem, quam nasci contigerit.

¹⁰³ See Cogitosus, *VBrigidae* 12: *Potentissima enim et ineffabili fidei fortitudine, quamdam feminam, post votum integritatis, fragilitate humana in iuuenili voluptatis desiderio lapsam, et habentem iam praegnantem ac tumescentem uterum, fideliter benedixit: et euanescente in vulua conceptu, sine partu et sine dolore eam sanam ad penitentiam restituit. Et secundum quod omniaabilia sunt credentibus, sine ulla impossibilitate innumera quotidie miracula operabatur.* Perhaps unsurprisingly this pericope has been edited out of the *PL* edition. My thanks to Charlie Wright for the reference.

¹⁰⁴ A legal view of the coincidence of legal personhood and baptism can be found in the *Liber Iudiciorum*, ed. Zeumer, *Leges Visigothorum* 4.2.17: a parent cannot inherit from a child who dies soon after birth, unless the child has lived ten days after baptism. The parents need to procure the eternal abode for the child, and the baby needs time to take possession of its earthly wealth. The *Pactus Legis Salicae* 24.6, however, still uses the naming of the infant (*ante quam nomen habeat*) and the 9th night as the limits for punishments for abortion and the killing of neonates.

¹⁰⁵ Labande 1981:150: *Ad hoc etiam pueruli cuiuspiam species pariter aderat, tantis clamoribus perstrepsens, ut ei quoque, quae id intuebatur, plurimum molestiae generaret. Cuius et mota vocibus dixit ad eum: ‘Quomodo domine tantos huius infantis eiulatus potes*

soul. At night the child howled and drove the paid nurses mad, even though they shook its rattle for it.¹⁰⁶ Nights became hell for the adoptive mother, but her sufferings diminished her husband's in purgatory, and she stood by her decision faithfully.¹⁰⁷ A redemptive counterpart to those tortured Later Roman couples condemned to eternal ménage-à-trois with their aborted children in hell! A final and exquisite example from Dante's *Purgatorio* shows Vergil himself transmuting his own *ahoroi* or *biaiothanatoi's* pagan weeping into the gentlest of sighs in the Limbo of the Unbaptized (7.28–33):

pati? — ‘Velim,’ inquit, ‘nolim, patior’. Ploratus autem huius infantis et brachii intercisio ac lateris hanc sententiam habebant. Cum pater meus in primaevo suo a legitimo matris meae commercio per quorundam maleficia esset extorris. . . . Qui iuveniliter eis obtemperans, male attentato concubitu ex muliercula nescio qua prolem sustulit, quae nec mora etiam sine baptismo diem obiit. In concisione ergo lateris corruptio est fidei socialis, in stridoribus autem infestae illius vocis perditio male procreati infantis.

¹⁰⁶ For an uncanny parallel from modern Japan, see LaFleur 1992:221: Nightmares and cries of living siblings “are really caused by dreams through which their aborted siblings deep in the realm of darkness give expression to their own distress and anger.”

¹⁰⁷ Labande 1981:154–55: *Igitur mater mea ex convenientia visionis veris vera conferens, et ex instanti oraculo militis mox perempti, quem poenales sibi locos apud inferos iam sortiti perviderat, infantis clamores, cuius non fuerat ignara coniciens. in nullo, de his subia, totam se ad subsidia patri meo ferenda convertit. Similia ergo similibus obiectans, paucorum admodum mensium infantulum parentibus orbatum, ad se contrahens nutrire delegit. At diabolus piae intentioni, nec minus fidelissimae actioni invidens, cum totis diebus placidissime se ageret, vicissim iocaretur atque dormiret, noctibus tanta vecordia vagituum et clamorum matrem meam et omnes eius domestica irritabat, ut vix in eadem cellula cuipiam somnum habuisse liceret. Audivi certe ab ea pretio obaeratas nutrices, quae noctibus non desisterent continuatis, perversi non a se, sed ab intimo instigatore, illius pueri motare crepundia; sed ad eum qui urgebat evertendum nihil poterat muliebris astutia.angebatur dolore immodico pia femina, dum nullis inter tot stridores moliminibus noctu anxia deliniret tempora, nec ullus etiam vexato penitus ac exhausto capiti poterat illabi somnus, ubi et instimulati forinsecus furor pueri, et omnia interturbans aderat inimicus. Et licet noctes sic ab illa transigerentur insomnes, et nunquam tamen ad divina quae nocte fiunt officia reperta est iners. Quoniam ergo molestias istas molestiarum hominis, quas in visione viderat, cognoverat purgatrices, libenter tolerabat, per quod, ut sibi videbatur, quod et verum est, illius qui patiebatur compatiendo et ipsa levigabat angores. Nunquam tamen proinde puerum domo exclusit, nunquam contra ipsum minus curiosa exstitit; imo tanto magis quidquid inconvenientiae inde emergebat, aequanimiter subire delegit, quanto ad id studii destruendum adversum se atrocius diabolus exarsisse persensit; quanto enim maius ipsius incentivum in irritatione pueruli contigisset experiri, tanto auditiones malas apud iugalis sui animam nullatenus dubitabat temperari.*

luogo è là giù non tristo di martiri
 ma di tenebre solo, ove i lamenti
 non suonan come guai, ma son sospiri.
 Quivi sto io coi pargoli innocenti
 dai denti morsi della morte avanti
 che fosse dall'umana colpe essenti.

One could not end with a more beautiful piece of verse.

Scholars and Society: Then, Now, Here and There

In the course of research for this article it became increasingly clear that abortion and related topics have the potential to bring out disturbing sides and demons even of great scholars. Salomon Reinach on masturbation is the author of perhaps the most outrageously racist *obiter dictum* I have seen from a classicist. These words seem penned with gratuitous spite.

A côté du tabou quasi universel du sang clanique, il fallait que les anthropoids d'avenir eussent le scrupule de verser leur propre sang et de répandre inutilement leur sève créatrice. Ce dernier tabou n'existe pas chez les singes et existe fort peu chez les nègres; c'est peut-être pourquoi les singes sont restés des singes et la plupart des nègres les cousins germains de ceux-ci. (Reinach 1906:319)

F. J. Dölger is ostensibly inoffensive. He innocently contrasted Roman support for family planning unfavorably with the practices of the *Germani*, while at the same time giving us a charming, if *kitschig*, postcard-picture of the Bavaria of his youth:

Noch lebt in Deutschland — leider seltener geworden — die alte germanische Sitte. Bei der Lesung des obigen Tacitustextes denke ich mit Freude zurück an die Zeit 1902/1903.

His first position in the Bavarian Odenwald took him almost daily very early in the morning through high country, a place called Neudorf near Amorbach. The local children went ahead of him, lighting their way in the dark with carriage lamps, on the way to church at Reichartshausen. The greatest number of children came from two peasant farms, one opposite the other on the road through the village.

Die Besitzer waren zwei Brüder, von denen der eine 18, der andere 15 Kinder hatte. In der einen Familie konnte man die Mutter als die älteste der Töchter ansehen, so jugendlich frisch war sie geblieben. Das erinnert an die Kinderfreudigkeit, die Tacitus so sehr an den Germanen rühmt. (Dölger 1934:1–2)

But when one looks at his words with hindsight, the priestly celibate emerges in 1934, singing, as it were, a *parodos* to the reproductive propaganda of the Nazi régime.

Sometimes something at an international and interdisciplinary conference clicks, in this case a parallel from modern Japanese Buddhism (and other Japanese religions), namely the practice called “Mizuko kuyō,” or “rites for water children.” These practices have recently evolved to propitiate the souls of stillborn, miscarried, and, above all, aborted fetuses. Some scholars see them as in many ways a positive development, enabling Japan to avoid the bitter abortion debates that have rent the United States.¹⁰⁸ They have been promoted in temples,¹⁰⁹ as well as by spiritualists and by advertisements in newspapers, which frighten young women with the possibility of ‘spirit attacks’ by the vengeful souls of their aborted children.¹¹⁰ And other scholars, such as Helen Hardacre, taking a more Marxist and feminist approach, see them more as ways to manipulate women and make money than as ways for the individual and her society to process grief for the unborn.

Many of the rather grim problems discussed surrounding the nature of the bodies, souls, and voices of aborted children are well documented, and indeed manipulated and exploited on the internet (a Google search speaks volumes), and, sadly, very much with us today in America.

Appendix: The Text and Interpretation of P. Bon. 4.1–4

The presence (or absence) in P. Bon. 4 of a woman who procured an abortion is important for attesting pre-Christian condemnation of abortion. Establishing the readings of the papyrus, let alone a critical

¹⁰⁸) For their pre-history and historical evolution, see LaFleur 1992.

¹⁰⁹) For the text of “Way to Memorialize One’s Mizuko” (Translation of the Promotional Brochure of the “Purple Cloud Temple”) see LaFleur 1992:221–23.

¹¹⁰) For illustrations, see Hardacre 1997:83–89.

text, is far from easy. I'll first present the readings of the available editions (including some partial critical comments) in order of publication.

Montevecchi and Pighi (1947:180)

] κρυαιρω [...] λαμω[
]κρυχεω []δεσ[]ε[
]προπαροιθε[] απορειψασα .[
]υθυια βι[] μενηνα[

Merkelbach (1951:5)

του δ'απο μ[ε]ν κρυα¹¹¹ιρω[ν θα]λαμων
 επτατο δακρυχεων [...] . δεσθεο[
 ἡ δ' ευνης προπαροιθε[ν] απορειψασα[
 ..] τεμεν Εἰλυθυια βι[αζ]ομενηνα[

Vogliano (Vogliano and Castiglioni 1952:103)

ην] τ' εμεν¹¹² Εἰλευθυια βιαζομενην α[πολυσαι

Vogliano here says that Merkelbach's Εἰλυθυια is not attested. He himself read ΕΥΘΥΙΑ.

Castiglioni (Vogliano and Castiglioni 1952:106)

ἡν] τ' εμεν¹¹³ Εἰλευθυια βιαζομενην α[ποτικτειν

Vogliano (1952)

η δ' ευνης προπαροιθε[ν] απορ(ρ)ειψασα θρ[ονοισι¹¹⁴
 <.....>
 ην] τεμεν ειλευθυια βιαζομενην α[πο φορτον

But she before her marriage, having torn away by means of drugs

... <missing line> ...

Whom (fem.) Eileithyia cut while she was doing violence to her burden.

Turcan (1956:149)

η δ' ευνης προπαροιθε[ν] απορ(ρ)ειψασα θρ[ονοισι
 <.....>
 ην] τεμεν ειλειθυια βιαζομενην α[πο φορτου¹¹⁵

¹¹¹) With a superscript ε.

¹¹²) Stroux; dismissed by Setaioli 1970:200.

¹¹³) Stroux.

¹¹⁴) Keydell's supplement. See Vogliano 1952:408.

¹¹⁵) Vogliano has -v.

Celle-ci, dès avant son mariage, avait, grâce à des simples, expulse... qu'Eilithyie avait tranchée en la séparant par violence¹¹⁶ du fœtus.

Montevecchi (1953:9)

τοῦ δ' ἀπὸ μ[ἐ]ν κρυερῶ[ν θα]λάμων[
ἔ]πατο δ[α] κρυχέων...]δεσθ[ε]
[ἦ] δ' εὐνῆς προπάροιθε[ν] ἀπορείψασα θρ[
[]τεμεν Εἰ[λ]εῦθυια βι[α]ζο[μ]ενην α[

Setaioli (1970:198–201)

[ἦ] δ' εὐνῆς προπάροιθε[ν] ἀπορειψασα θρ[ονοισι
<.....>
ην] τεμεν Εἰ[λ]εῦθυια βι[α]ζ[ο] μ[ε]νην α[πο φορτου

Lloyd-Jones and Parsons (1978:89)

Τοῦ δ' ἀπὸ μ[ἐ]ν κρυερῶ[ν..]λαμῶν[
ἔ]πατο δακρυχέων[.] .δεσθε .[
ἦ δ' εὐνῆς προπάροιθε[ν] ἀπορρίψασαδ .[
ἔσ]τενεν Εἰ[λ]εῦθυια βι[α]ζ[ο]μενηνα[

Of him/it away from the fearful chambers...
flew, weeping...
But she in front of the bed, having torn off...
Eileithyia mourns one (fem.) having caused violence....

Bernabé (2005:272–73 = Fr. 717)

Τοῦ δ' ἀπὸ μ[ἐ]ν κρυερῶ[ν θα]λάμων[
ἔ]πατο δακρυχέων[.] . δεσθε .[
ἦ δ' εὐνῆς προπάροιθε[ν] ἀπορρίψασα δ[
ἔσ]τενεν Εἰ[λ]εῦθυια βι[α]ζ[ο]μενην α[

The lines that interest us appear at the beginning of the description of the underworld. Only one published photograph of the papyrus is available,¹¹⁷ and many of the scholars who edited the text or printed texts of the passage had not seen the papyrus. Only Pighi and Montevecchi, Vogliano, Setaioli, Lloyd-Jones and Parsons, and Maltomini examined it in person. Even Merkelbach was working exclusively from photographs and from Vogliano's transcriptions.¹¹⁸ As is clear from their

¹¹⁶) I do not understand how he can construe the accusative participle with Eileithyia.

¹¹⁷) Maltomini 1991. I am working from a blow-up and enhancement of it taken with a digital camera.

¹¹⁸) Hence the complaints of Montevecchi 1951.

transcriptions they disagree considerably about what is visible and what not. To make matters worse, the texts detailed above are not always directly comparable, some being final editions, others diplomatic transcriptions. But even the latter have not consistently noted spaces, and some are hybrids without final accentuation, but with editorial interventions. No one who has worked on the text or edited it has translated it *per se*, but there are some translations (without texts) in Jahn (1995:58–73).

Some of the disagreement may be caused by damage that was done the papyrus between the late 1940s and the late 1970s.¹¹⁹ The photograph I use was provided by Maltomini, and shows the papyrus as it was in 1991 (Maltomini 1991, Plate III).

Editing and particularly editing fragmentary texts from papyrus can seem an activity permitting endless license and circularity of argument. One senses this in Nardi's frustration with previous editors. Sometimes the easiest way to proceed is to show step-by-step how one is pulling the rabbit out of a hat, and what hard evidence justifies one's interventions and why. One begins with the minimal text, not with a composite house of cards. This is what I can still read:

Του . . . πο . . . κρυαι¹²⁰ρω [. . .] λαμω[~ ~ ~ ~ ~ x
] πτατο δακρυχεω [~ ~] δεσ[] ε[~ ~ ~ ~ ~ x
] δε ενης προπαροιθε[] απορειψασα . [~ ~ x
 ~] τεμεν ε[.] υθυια βι[~] μενηνα[~ ~ ~ x

The first line contains one clear word κρυερῶ, and another that is easily completed, namely λαμω yielding θαλαμω. The case could be dative, or more probably genitive plural, “frozen,” “chilly,” or “horrid,” ‘bed-chamber(s).’ But are these chambers literally cold or are they “horrific” in some way? And are they literal rooms, specifically *bed*-chambers, or a metaphor for the *atria Ditis* or the grave or for the body as grave? (Turcan 1956:142–43). In the second line δακρυχεων, “weeping” in

¹¹⁹) For example the apparent disappearance of the θρ in line 3 that was seen by Vogliano, but is no longer there; Setaioli 1970:198 n.2. Montevocchi (1953:9) underlines letters visible to Vogliano, but subsequently illegible. See the complaints of Nardi 1970:189. Setaioli (1973:130) countered that Vogliano was a valid witness, no different from a humanist who had transcribed a lost manuscript.

¹²⁰) ε *corr. secunda manus*.

the masculine nominative is undisputed, and the verb *επτάτο*, “flew away,” seems easily legible. Someone unspecified flew away or fled, the chilly bedchambers, weeping. But who? A suicide’s soul?¹²¹ An Eros or Hymenaeus? (Lloyd-Jones and Parsons 1978:89) That of an adulterer? A *moichos* killed *in flagrante*, as suggested by Setaioli, seems so far the best possibility.¹²²

The female partner would then be introduced by the *in δε* line 3. In line 3 the feminine participle suggests that there must have been a missing *η* at the beginning of the line, “But she, after having torn away.” But, if that is correct, then there must be a line missing altogether, as Vogliano suggested, for otherwise the likely *η* has no verb, and there is no way to account for the switch to what seems to be another subject, namely Eileithyia in the next line with its verb *τεμεν*.

If one insists on working with what is there, as was Nardi, and not positing a lacuna, then one must assume a missing object as the first word in line 3, for example, *ην*, “she whom.” The line would then refer to the punishment of the woman by death while undergoing an abortion: “whom Eileithyia struck/cut while she was doing violence <to the burden [of her womb]>...” All the participles would then need accusative endings, including *ἀπορρίψασα*, which will not work: there is a clear space after its final *α* and the metre would be problematic.

Lloyd-Jones and Parsons likewise print a text with no lacuna inserted between vv. 3 and 4; they read *ἔσ]τενεν* and comment that *ἀπορρίψασα* “ergo non ad praegnantem respicit, sed ad Ilithyiam; ergo corruunt plerumque, quae disputaverunt inter se Setaioli et Nardi.” They seem to be suggesting that Eileithyia lost her labour or effort. But it remains unclear how the nominative *ἡ* can be reconciled with the nominative *Εἰ[λ]εύθυια* without positing a missing line. A verb for the *ἡ* is required and an object for *ἀπορρίψασα*, and both cannot be fitted into the missing syllables at the end of v. 3.

¹²¹ Turcan (1956:140) suggested *psyche*, whose gender, however, will not work with the participle.

¹²² Setaioli (1970:193–96), treating the grouping as sexual sinners. *Thalamon* would have its natural meaning of bed chamber, and *krueron* would be used in the sense of “horrifying.” The weeping is that of Homeric souls lamenting their youth, and the class of sinners is Vergil’s (*Aen.* 6.612 *quique ob adulterium caesi*.) See also Lucian, *Kataplus* 5 ὁ δ’ ὑπὸ τοῦ μοιχοῦ καὶ γυναικὸς φονευθεὶς.

This suggests the following working conclusions:

1. There must be a lacuna after verse 3.
2. Setaioli's argument, that the male sinner in vv. 1-2 is a *moichos*, is compelling. The female sinner in vv. 3-4 is somehow paired with him, and the most obvious conclusion is that she is his (unmarried) sex-partner. He is thus a debaucher of unmarried girls, of the sort decried by a good parallel text, *Or. Sib.* 2.280–82 (cited by Setaioli 1970:199), killed *in flagrante*. Adultery and child-killing (by smothering?) are likewise paired by Ps.-Cyprian, *Carmen de resurrectione* 343 *si quis adulter erat, natos quicumque necarat*.¹²³
3. The letter read by Lloyd-Jones and Parsons as well as Bernabé as a -v is actually a -μ.¹²⁴ This leaves us again with τεμεν.
4. The presence of Eileithyia who is cutting/striking a woman who has done violence to something/someone ensures that the context involves birthing.
5. Given this context, the obvious victim is the child.
6. The sequence of the legible participles favours abortion rather than infanticide by exposure. As Setaioli pointed out (1973:132–33), “having torn away” clearly precedes the present participle βι[αζ]ομενην, which itself is contemporaneous to the birthing. The passage cannot be about a woman who tossed away her child after birth.

Thus I would translate what remains of the lines as follows:

But she, before her marriage, having torn away with drugs... <missing line> Eileithyia cut her off,¹²⁵ even as she was doing violence to.

¹²³) See Chrysostom, *Hom in Rom.* 24.5 in *PG* 60.626 for the declension from drunkenness to fornication to adultery to murder, and Greg. Nyss, *De infantibus* in Downing, McDonough and Hörner 1972:87.18 for illicit unions and infanticide: ὅσα τῆς παρὰ νόμου κυήσεως ἔλεγχος γίνεται καὶ διὰ τοῦτο παρὰ τῶν γεννησαμένων ἐξαφανίζεται; for exposure and smothering, see 73.10 ἢ ἐκτεθεὶς ἢ καταπνιγείς.

¹²⁴) Compare the transverse strokes of the -v's in μενην in the same line. I am grateful to Stephen Bay for confirming my impression about the letter.

¹²⁵) Translate τεμεν like this, in light of Eileithyia's association with the Moirai. See Jessner 1905:2105.15.

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Hell Disarmed? The Function of Hell in Reformation Spirituality

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Abstract

In Late Medieval Christianity, the concept of hell was closely connected to the sacrament of penance. Hell could be avoided through the right use of penance. And the cleansing sufferings in purgatory could to a certain extent replace the eternal sufferings in hell. The Protestant Reformation rejected purgatory, and returned to a traditional dualistic view of the relationship between heaven and hell. At the same time, hell seems to lose some of its religious importance in early Protestant spirituality. This change is illustrated through a comparison of two central texts belonging more or less to the same genre: on the one hand the famous Late Medieval illustrated *Ars moriendi* and on the other Luther's *Sermon von der Bereitung zum Sterben* from 1519.

Keywords

Lutheran hell, Protestant spirituality, *Ars moriendi*

Hell is not an important theme in Reformation theology; at least it is not a first line topic of theological debate during the Reformation. The existence of hell as part of the topography of the other world was hardly questioned by anyone, and at a first glance, the reformers of the sixteenth century did not seem to change very much in this part of theology. Particularly in more popular theological contexts, for instance in sermons, hell was as natural a part of theological discourse among Friars of the fifteenth century as it was among Lutherans of the sixteenth century. It was presupposed by all parties as a topic founded in New Testament discourse.

At a closer look, though, hell was by no means unaffected by the religious changes of the Reformation. Though the topic remains, the *function* of hell changes considerably — not to say dramatically. These changes can be traced on different levels of religious discourse. In this contribution, I will comment on the general change in theology and presumably also in religious mentality caused by the Reformation protest against purgatory and against the penitential system of the Late Middle Ages, resulting in a new way of thinking both about punishment and about the afterlife. This general change does not apply only to the Lutheran Reformation. Rather, it is part of common Protestant theology, and therefore is relevant also to Calvinist theology and to the theology of the radical Reformation. Hence, one could probably say that it is part of a new religious mentality with regard to life and death, where the topic of hell gains a very different function from the one it had in Late Medieval religion, and also from what it continues to have in modern Roman Catholic Christianity.¹

There are, though, good reasons to concentrate specifically on Luther in discussing this change. Not only was he the first advocate of the new way of relating to the other world, he also went deeper into the questions of sin and punishment than any other Reformation theologian. It should be added specifically, though, that there is also — in spite of some common presuppositions and in spite of the common protest against purgatory and against the penitential system of the Roman Church — considerable variety within Reformation theology as to the more specific religious and theological functions of hell. In spite of this, Luther deserves to be treated as the main exponent of a new Protestant attitude to hell.

Penance in Progress

A main focus of Late Medieval Christianity was the sacrament of penance. Both in church law, in daily religious practice and in theological discourse the occupation with individual sin and forgiveness had

¹) See Camporesi 1990. This book concentrates on developments in Catholic Europe.

evidently increased since the twelfth century, and the sacrament of penance was the primary place to deal with these matters. Since 1215, every adult Christian was obliged by church law to go to penance at least once a year. And from this time on, the business of penance attracted more and more attention throughout the Late Middle Ages. This was the case both among lay people and among monks, priests and the church leadership.²

Along with an increased occupation with penance goes an increased occupation with hell. Hell is a significant theme in the Gospels of the New Testament, especially in Matthew. Even though it is not a theme in the early Christian confessions summarizing the *credo* of the Christian communities, and neither a theme nor a motif in early Christian art, the importance of hell gradually increases during the Middle Ages. And it is reasonable to assume that this development is closely linked to the development of the system of penance: the motor of the increasing importance of hell is the increasing importance of the sacrament of penance. The rhetoric of hell, based on biblical traditions in the Gospels, becomes a more important part of the ideology of the penitential system of the church. And due to this, throughout the Middle Ages hell becomes a more and more significant theme in Christian art and in Christian preaching, and to a certain extent also in Christian theology.

The key passage in the New Testament in this connection was Matthew 25:41–43:

Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me."

No New Testament passage was more frequently used as a point of departure for sermons about hell during the Middle Ages, and no New

² An expression of this intensive occupation with the sacrament of penance is to be found in the *Sentence Commentary* (a kind of a systematic theological handbook) written by the influential nominalist theologian Gabriel Biel in Tübingen: the fourth book of his work is devoted to the sacraments, and in this book more than 600 pages are devoted to the sacrament of penance alone in part II, whereas 500 pages are devoted to all the other sacraments in part I. See Biel 1975–77.

Testament passage was more often drawn upon as a textual background for medieval illustrations of hell and its tortures. The text had a specific authority because it came from the Gospels, and even more than that, it was a quotation from Jesus himself. Although the word “hell” does not occur in the passage, the context given by other Jesus-sayings in the same Gospel — where the word hell is used several times — left no doubt in the minds of medieval Christians that Jesus was here talking about hell.

What did a medieval Christian have to do in order to avoid going to hell? In medieval penitential theology, the teaching about sin and punishment was considerably more complicated than in the words of Jesus just quoted. There were different kinds of sin and, correspondingly, different kinds of punishment. Sin was divided into three kinds: (a) original sin (*peccatum originale*), (b) deadly sins (*peccata mortalia*) and (c) forgivable sins (*peccata venialia*). The first two of these categories, original sin and the deadly sins, qualified for hell as punishment.

To avoid this punishment, the sacraments of the church were necessary. It was a common teaching in medieval theology that the power of original sin was taken away in baptism, so that baptized people did not have to fear the punishment of hell resulting from original sin. The two other kinds of sin, the deadly and the forgivable sins, were dealt with by the sacrament of penance. In the tradition from Gregory the Great, the seven deadly sins were commonly listed as *luxuria* (extravagance, later lust), *gula* (gluttony), *avaritia* (greed), *acedia* (sloth), *ira* (vengeance, more commonly known as anger), *invidia* (envy), and *superbia* (pride). These sins were so grave that a person who had committed one of them fell out of the state of grace. This in turn meant that on the day of the Last Judgment he or she would be placed on the left side of Christ, among the damned. But through the sacrament of penance, that is, through *contritio* (regret), *confessio* and *satisfactio*, the fatal consequence of deadly sin could be avoided. This was also the politics of the church: to call all Christians to penance at least once a year and relieve them first of all from deadly sins.

The consequence of all this was that the great majority of Christians in the Late Middle Ages would after all have no reason to fear hell. Most people had been baptized, and were thereby saved from the punishment resulting from original sin. And we can also presume that a majority of the European population in the Late Middle Ages went to

penance once a year, as prescribed by the pope. In this way, there existed a regular procedure for freeing oneself from the punishment in hell caused by unforgiven, deadly sin. This was the intention of the church and probably also the normal practice of the population during the Late Middle Ages.

Purgatory Prevails over Hell

The result of all this was that, for the great majority of Christians, the most relevant punishment for sin was to take place in a place other than hell: in purgatory. Purgatory was the *tertius locus*, the third place, in the other world, and for most practical purposes it was here that the account of sin and punishment for ordinary Christians was to be settled.³ Like hell, purgatory too was a fire. But it was not a fire inflicting eternal punishment, like that of hell according to normal church teaching. Instead, it was a fire for cleansing from sin. The logic was quite simple: either a sin was so grave that it could not be removed by cleansing; such a sin belonged in the eternal fire of hell. Or a sin was lighter, so that it could be removed through cleansing. These lighter sins belonged in purgatory. And once arrived in purgatory, a sinner could be sure that she or he was on the way to heaven, after a shorter or longer process of cleansing. After the condemnation in 543 of the Origenist teaching that the fire of hell provided cleansing for all sinners, with the so-called *apokatastasis* as the result, the dual view of hell as a place of eternal damnation and purgatory as one for temporary cleansing gradually gained predominance.

The sins that were to be cleansed in purgatory, were, first of all, the forgivable sins,⁴ but secondly also the unfinished punishments decreed by the priest as part of the sacrament of penance; the so called *satisfactio*. The books of penance, a popular genre in later medieval theology, prescribed what would be the appropriate *satisfactio* for different kinds of sins. Since the *absolutio* was bestowed on the sinner prior to the

³) For a more detailed discussion of the emergence of Purgatory as a third place in the other world, see Le Goff 1981. For critical comments to Le Goff, see Marshall 2002:7 n.5.

⁴) Le Goff 1981, especially 284–316, in the chapter “La Logique du Purgatoire.”

fulfillment of the works of *satisfactio*, the punishment for the forgiven deadly sins might remain with the believer for many years. And if the works of satisfaction had not been fulfilled by the time of a person's death, they had to be compensated by cleansing in purgatory before admittance to heaven.

Consequently, purgatory, and not hell, was the normal place to go to after death for the average Christian. There, he or she would complete a shorter or longer stay of cleansing to settle the account of sin and forgiveness before entering the company of God and the saints in heaven. Church propaganda also had good reason for concentrating more on purgatory than on hell, since purgatory, in contrast to hell, was a place where the procedures could be influenced by the church itself. This church influence on purgatory was most of all evident through the teaching and practice of indulgence, which became prevalent in the Late Middle Ages and has been maintained as part of the teaching of the Catholic Church until this day. A letter of indulgence was a certificate that qualified for the relief of a certain amount of punishment in purgatory. It was issued by the church, and its value was guaranteed by the so-called *thesaurus ecclesiae*, the treasure of good works (primarily performed by monks and priests) exceeding the measure of a settled account for salvation. This treasure had been entrusted to the church and could be converted into shares for sale for the benefit of those who were in need of them, both living and dead.

By means of this extension of the system of penance into the afterlife and the world beyond, the church and the clergy also increased their own symbolic power. They possessed direct influence not only on what happened in this world, but also on the next. Heaven and hell were beyond their reach, but purgatory was an arena where the church had been granted a major role, and thus there was good reason for constructing a system of penance where purgatory for all practical purposes was more important than hell.

New Focus on Hell

If the preceding account is an adequate description of the normal function of hell in relationship to purgatory in Late Medieval Christianity in the West, it could be added that hell played a more prominent role

in certain parts of Late Medieval theology. One important example of this is Nominalist theology, also called the *via moderna*, a school which also deeply influenced the theology of Martin Luther. Here, the role of free will and the contribution of each individual Christian were underlined as preconditions for receiving the grace of God. The alternative to this was hell. This way of thinking was supported by a general development in Late Medieval penitential theology, where the requirements of the *contritio* — the prescribed remorse and regret which was the first step in the process of penance — were increased and intensified in a way that made it very difficult for a religious person to be sure that he or she was really capable of meeting them.⁵

Seen together, these two developments, Nominalist theology and the psychological requirements posed by the books of penance, could easily contribute to the kind of crisis which Martin Luther is reported to have gone through (see Brecht 1981:82–88). He put all his power into the task of a thorough and right penance, but the more he invested, the more insecure he felt, and the more the threat of hell appeared to him as the deserved outcome of his insufficient struggles. In this religious context, the sacrament of penance is no longer the reliable defense it was supposed to be against the deadly sins and their fitting punishment: hell.

Luther and the Reformation

There are very good reasons to maintain that Luther contributed in a radical way to changing the function of hell in the northern parts of Western Christianity. In Luther's own theology, and in most of subsequent Protestant religion, hell came to play a role very different from that outlined above. In brief, the changes can be characterized as follows:

As a consequence of Luther's critique of indulgence and of the use of the sacrament of penance, purgatory was removed from the theology and the religious life of the Protestants. The dualism of heaven and hell of the Gospels was restored, and the involvement of the church with

⁵) For the general changes in the conceptions of hell in the Middle Ages, see Rasmussen 1986.

the details of the afterlife was abolished. Through this rearrangement of the topography of life after death, hell gained a new importance — though not in the sense that it became a central topic in Reformation theology and preaching. Sin is a much more fundamental concept than hell as a possible consequence of sin, and the main focus is on salvation from sin, not on the threats of hell. So, it is rather the *function of hell* within the discourse about sin, salvation and damnation that changes fundamentally with the Reformation, and not so much the rhetoric of hell as a theological topic in general. These changes in the function of hell are deeply rooted in Reformation theology and its new views of sin and salvation.

To Luther, the medieval differentiations between original sin, deadly sin and forgivable sin were of little or no importance. He also rejected theological reasoning about how different sacraments could relieve Christians from different kinds of sin. Already in his early theology, he protested against the traditional view that original sin was taken away by baptism. Rather, he maintained that original sin is part of the conditions of life in this world for every Christian, and that one can get rid of it only in the next life. Similarly, he argued that the distinction between deadly and forgivable sin was irrelevant: every sin has the potential to be deadly, and at the same time, every sin has the potential to be forgiven.⁶ Even though he did not reject the sacrament of penance, he gave it quite a new function: it is an institute for coping with sin in general, and its main elements are *confessio* (of sin) and *absolutio* (by the priest on behalf of God).⁷

Especially, Luther rejected the element of *satisfactio*, which had been of central importance in medieval teaching on penance, and which was fundamental to the system of indulgence and to the theology of purgatory. His main argument for this rejection was his teaching about salvation as a consequence of grace alone, unaffected by good deeds accomplished by man. This teaching also implied a very critical attitude to the element of *contritio* in medieval penitential theology: as Luther

⁶ See Luther 1979–99, 1:201–6 (*Disputatio Heidelbergae habita* [1518]: *Probationes conclusionum* to the theses III–XVI).

⁷ For a radical critique of Late Medieval views and practices regarding the sacrament of penance, see Luther 1979–99, 2:227–234 (*De captivitate Babylonica* [1520]: *De sacramento poenitentiae*).

himself knew, this *contritio* — described in detail in Late Medieval Nominalist theology as a precondition for receiving the *absolutio* of the priest — could be very difficult to accomplish, and could easily be experienced as a big achievement in itself.

In this way, both the teaching about sin and the theology of the sacraments relevant for coping with the impending punishment of hell were quite radically changed already in Luther's early theology, and all these changes became fundamental to subsequent protestant theology. Original sin accompanies man constantly through this life; every sin is potentially deadly, and neither baptism nor penance can give any kind of safety against the gravest kinds of sin and their consequences. In Luther's view, radical sin accompanies man throughout this life, and therefore, hell also threatens man throughout life. Behind this view lies his definition of the Christian person as being fundamentally double. From the beginning to the end man has a double qualification: on the one hand, he is a sinner who has part in original sin and who, on one level or another (through thoughts, will or actions), also commits sin; on the other hand, man is beyond the reach of sin by hearing and accepting the gospel of the forgiveness of sin, and here he has nothing to fear.⁸ This double definition of man is often expressed by the Latin phrase *Simul iustus and peccator*, and plays a key role in protestant anthropology, at least up to the period of pietism in Germany and Scandinavia.

Within this context, hell together with sin accompanies man through his whole life, as a threat and danger to avoid. And the only way to avoid it is by holding on to external powers: to the Gospel and to the sacraments. Throughout life forgiveness is needed continuously, because sin is present all the time. But the means to avoid hell are not defined in terms of the *contritio* and *satisfactio* left to the individual believer to accomplish, but rather in terms of holding on to something which is external to the individual. In this way, the fear of hell can be diminished or abolished. Salvation from hell is certain because the Gospel of God is certain, in contrast to the ability of man to accomplish the prescribed *contritio* and *satisfactio*, which is not at all certain. Thus, even

⁸) The double nature of the Christian is described in Luther 1979–99, 2:264–309 (*De libertate Christiana* [1520]).

though hell is still present as a topic in the theological discourse of Reformation theology, it is supposed to be a reality to be feared less than before, because the teaching about salvation from without provides better protection against hell and more comfort against the fear of hell.

Whether or not this theological view was also worked out according to its intentions in practical religious life in the early Protestant communities is difficult to say. Evidently, the new dualism of the afterlife reintroduced by Luther had important practical consequences for the individual Christian in his or her relationship to death. Purgatory, as the normal place to go to after death, had been removed. And with purgatory, the possibility for the church to extend its power into the afterlife had also been removed. In the protestant view, no human being, whether priest or layperson, could do anything to influence the fate of a dead person. Purgatory did not exist, and hell was not a place of cleansing for the improvement of sinners (the Origenist view); it was only, and nothing more than, a place of eternal torment, parallel to heaven as a place of eternal joy. In both cases, God alone makes the decision about who will go there, and human beings should not try to find out too much about such things. They do not belong to the revelation of the Bible, but are rather questions to which the old saying applies: *Quae supra nos, nihil ad nos* — “What lies above us is none of our business” (see Jüngel 1980).

The Dualism of *temptatio* and *consolatio* in the Late Medieval Illustrated *Ars moriendi*

The new function of hell in Protestant theology and religious life is a vast topic, and apart from general overviews, little research has so far specifically addressed this topic. The following comments will be restricted to one short, but important text, where the function of hell in Luther's religious thought is expressed in a very typical way. The text is the “Sermon von der Bereitung zum Sterben,” written in October 1519 and printed in Wittenberg the same month. This text can be characterized as a typical Protestant text, not only because it was very often reprinted and also translated into several languages during Luther's lifetime, but also because of its extended use in wide circles of

Lutherans throughout several generations after Luther's death.⁹ The text undoubtedly emerges from the Late Medieval tradition of *Ars moriendi*, and in many ways it also confirms this tradition: it is addressed to a person facing death, and its aim is to offer the necessary comfort in this situation. The situation is defined as an intensified struggle between God and the Devil, and the aim of the pamphlet is to help the dying person to identify with and to hold on to the good forces in order to die in peace.

The Late Medieval *Ars moriendi* was transmitted in two different versions, one longer treatise and one short illustrated pamphlet. The shorter version was widely spread during the late 15th and early 16th centuries because it was printed several times as a blockbook. This short illustrated *Ars moriendi* is indebted to Jean Gerson, but also to other Late Medieval authors who had contributed to developing the genre.¹⁰ This Pre-Reformation text is well suited for a comparison with Luther's text from 1519. The two pamphlets provide typical examples of the old and the new ages within the same genre of religious literature related to death and dying. What can be said about the changing function of hell from the one text to the other?

The illustrated *Ars moriendi* from the 15th century consists of texts and woodcuts, quite equally distributed throughout the 26 pages.¹¹ It is evidently a text conceived for practical use: text and pictures are closely connected, and together they provide very concrete guidance on what to think, what to feel, what to say and what to do when death approaches. The central part of the illustrated *Ars moriendi* deals with five contrasting impulses arranged around the concepts of *faith*, *desperation*, *impatience*, *vainglory* and *avarice*. On the one hand, the devil tempts the dying person in all these areas, trying to convince the poor soul that his or her *faith* is worth nothing and unable to help him or her to salvation.

⁹ 25 reprints in German are documented before 1525. For a detailed list of translations until 1543, see Reinis 2007:48.

¹⁰ At the Council of Constance (1414–1418), Jean Gerson had presented a text *De arte moriendi*, and the anonymous *Ars moriendi* versions are indebted to Gerson's treatise. See Reinis 2007:17–18; and O'Connor 1942:11–17.

¹¹ *Ars moriendi, ex variis sententiis collecta cum figuris ad resistendum in mortis agone dyabolice suggestioni valens cuilibet Christifideli utilis ac multum necessaria*, Landshutum 1514.

He also tempts the dying person through *desperatio* — *quae est contra spem et confidentiam quam homo debet habere in deum* — and produces further temptations related to the mental situations described by the three remaining concepts. On the other hand, the angels come to the dying person's assistance in all the different temptations — the *Bona inspiratio angeli de fide, contra desperationem* and so on. The consolation with regard to faith consists in words like, "O man, do not believe in the sick suggestions of the devil. He is a liar . . ." (*O Homo ne credas pestíferas suggestionibus Dyaboli, cum ipse sit mendax*).

In a regular order, one full-page woodcut and one page of text are devoted both to each temptation and to each consolation. The dying person is supposed to first confront the dangers and temptations most relevant to his or her situation, and then to be as open as possible to the help available. At the end of this mental process, the good death is envisaged as the prescribed outcome. The final text page quotes prayers recommended for the hour of death. With Christ, Mary, Saints, family members and other good people present, the main person of the illustrated *Ars moriendi* can commit his soul to God: *In manus tuas Domine commendo spiritum meum*.

Little is said about heaven and even less about hell in the illustrated *Ars moriendi*.¹² Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the sacrament of penance and the alternative prospects of going to hell, heaven or purgatory after death must be taken into account as the mental and practical religious context for the *Ars moriendi*. "This interpretative framework is necessary for understanding the illustrated *Ars moriendi*. The *Ars moriendi* teaches that the dying person by means of patient suffering may merit a lessening of punishment that awaits him in purgatory."¹³ But it is important to add that the outcome of spiritual preparation for death according to the illustrated *Ars moriendi* is and has to be uncertain. "Uncertainty of salvation" is a theological principle presupposed

¹²) Hell is addressed in the text in connection with the devil's temptation pertaining to faith, where he is trying to convince the dying person that he or she belongs in hell: *Inferno fractus est*.

¹³) Reinis 2007:20. She continues: "However, according to Gerson's *Ars moriendi*, with true contrition he may merit not only a reduction of time in purgatory but also forgiveness of guilt and therefore admission into paradise."



Figure 1. The final page of the 1514 Landshut edition of the illustrated *Ars moriendi*.

in the spirituality of the illustrated *Ars moriendi*.¹⁴ At the end of the Landshut edition quoted here, this final uncertainty of salvation is strikingly expressed through the final woodcut, placed after the instructions for prayers to be spoken in the final hour of the process of dying. Here we find an image of the Last Judgment, where the Archangel Michael is standing with his scales and his sword. The weighing is to take place after death, and no one can know its outcome.

The Dualism of Heaven and Hell in Luther's "Sermon von der Bereitung zum Sterben"

Luther's sermon from 1519 is also written with a very practical religious purpose in mind. Like the illustrated *Ars moriendi*, it is designed as a manual for persons confronting death. Unlike the illustrated *Ars moriendi*, Luther's text is not illustrated. Instead, the woodcuts are replaced by frequent references to mental images. But the religious function of these mental images seems to be similar to that of the woodcuts in the illustrated *Ars moriendi*. Luther's text is also very short, not much longer than the textual part of the illustrated *Ars moriendi*. And like the illustrated *Ars moriendi*, Luther's text too is organized around the dualism of a few central concepts, which are also conceived as mental images. Nevertheless, in spite of all these similarities, which demonstrate that the two texts belong to a common literary genre and to a common religious tradition, there are some very striking differences between the texts. Whereas Luther's text on the one hand is firmly rooted in the mental world of Late Medieval religion, it is also, at the same time, a typical expression of the new mental world of Protestant religiosity. In Luther's text, hell is a significant topic. And the religious function of hell in Luther's text definitely has to be understood as an expression of and within the context of this new, Protestant religiosity.

Whereas the dualistic structure of the illustrated *Ars moriendi* is dominated by the contrast between the temptations of the devil on the one hand and the consolation of the angels of God on the other, located within the religious context of penance and purgatory and surrounded

¹⁴) Ibid. 17–46, in the Chapter "Between Fear and Hope: Uncertainty of Salvation in the Late Medieval *Ars moriendi*."

by the fundamental presuppositions of the uncertainty of salvation, the dualistic structure of Luther's *Sermo* is dominated by the contrast between heaven and hell, or more precisely: by the dualism between the images of "sin, death and hell" on the one hand, and the images of "life, grace and salvation" on the other. Luther's *Sermo* is divided into 20 small chapters, and all the way from chapter 5 (on the second page) to the end in chapter 20 on the last page this dualism dominates the argument. What is the function of hell within the framework of this dualism?

In Luther's text, the dualistic structure of the argument is closely related to the use of the sacraments:

Sixth, to recognize the virtues of the sacraments, we must know the evils which they contend with and which we face. There are three such evils: first, the terrifying image of death; second, the awesomely manifold image of sin; third, the unbearable and unavoidable image of hell and eternal damnation. Every other evil issues from these three and grows large and strong as a result of such mingling. (Luther 1969:101)¹⁵

The most important characteristic of the sacraments is, according to Luther, that they can be trusted:

I show them (= the Sacraments) due honor when I believe that I truly receive what the sacraments signify and all that God declares and indicates in them. . . . Since God himself here speaks and acts through the priest, we would do him in his Word and work no greater dishonor than to doubt whether it is true. And we can do him no greater honor than to believe that his Word and work are true and firmly rely on them. (Ibid.)¹⁶

¹⁵ The original German text: "Zum Sechsten / Die tugend der sacrament zu erkennen / muss man vorwissen / die untugend / da widder sie fechten und uns geben seynd / Der seyn drey / die erste / das erschrockliche bild des todtis / die ander / das graulich manigfaltig bilde der sund / die dritte / das untreglich und unvormeydliche bild / der hellen und ewiges vordamnuess. Nu wechst ein yglichs auss dissen dreyen / und wird gross und starck / auss seinen zusatzen" (Luther 1979–99, 1:233, lines 23–28).

¹⁶ "Die eehre ist / das ich glaub / es sey war und geschech mir / was die sacrament bedeuten / und alls was gott / darynnen sagt und anzeygt / . . . / Dan die weyl da selbst got durch den priester redt / und zeychnet / mocht man gott kein grosser uneehr / yn synem wort und werck thun / dan zweyfelden / ab es war sey / und kein grosser eehre thun / den glauben es war sey / und sich frey drauf vorlassen" (Luther 1979–99, 1:233, lines 16–21). See also in chapter 17, where Luther again speaks about the sacrament handed over by the priest: "...it will and must therefore be true that the divine sign

If, then, “uncertainty of salvation” is a main characteristic of the religiosity of the Late Medieval *Ars moriendi*,¹⁷ Luther’s starting point is quite the opposite. God’s promise and signs as expressed in the sacraments have to be trusted. There is no room for any “uncertainty of salvation,” which would be the same as unbelief.¹⁸ This theological presupposition is again decisive for understanding the function of hell in Luther’s text.

Luther expounds the image of hell quite extensively in chapter 8. The power of this image is due to the Devil’s efforts: “...the devil is determined to blast God’s love from a man’s mind and to arouse thoughts of God’s wrath.... When man is being assailed with thoughts regarding his election, he is being assailed by hell.”¹⁹ Hell is not described in topographical terms, but as a state of mind, as an assault on man’s soul. What is Luther’s advice in this situation? His advice is to fight the images of sin, death and hell: “...to drop them and have nothing to do with them.... You must look at death while you are alive and see sin in the light of grace and hell in the light of heaven, permitting nothing to divert you from that view.”²⁰

Conclusions

In the illustrated *Ars moriendi*, the final page with the woodcut of the Last Judgment and hell reminds the dying person of hell as a possible

does not deceive me. I will not let anyone rob me of it. I would rather deny all the world and myself than doubt my God’s trustworthiness and truthfulness in his signs and promises” (Luther 1969:111; Luther 1979–99, 1:241, lines 5–8).

¹⁷) See n.14.

¹⁸) Luther’s strong insistence on this point in 1519 could be seen in connection with his theological discussions with the Roman Curia the previous year. In October 1518, Luther met Cardinal Cajetan (OP) in Augsburg, and the Cardinal interviewed Luther about his theology in order to decide whether he should be charged as a heretic. The most important point in this interview, where Luther had no concessions to give, was the question of the certainty of faith and salvation. See Selge 1968; and Brecht 1981:237–55.

¹⁹) Luther 1969:103; cf. Luther 1979–99, 1:235, 5–6 and 13–15.

²⁰) Luther 1969:103; cf. Luther 1979–99, 1:235, lines 27–30 (“...sie fallen lassen / unnd nichts mit yhn handeln.... Du must den tod / yn dem leben / die sund / yn der gnadenn / die hell / ym hymell ansehen / und dich von dem ansehen odder blick / nit lassen treyben.”) Similar sentences are to be found in chapter 12 and chapter 20.

and in fact impending outcome of an unsuccessful preparation for death. This picture confirms the Late Medieval system of penitence as the immediate interpretative context of the illustrated *Ars moriendi*. The final preparation for death has to be seen in connection with the prescribed use of the sacraments of the Church, and most of all in connection with the sacrament of penance. The dying person has to follow the penitential procedures to avoid hell, and the illustrated *Ars moriendi* adds some final instructions to the ordinary penitential requirements of the Church. In these final instructions, the use of the sacraments plays no central role (Reinis 2007:30–35). The decisive matter is for the dying person to do his or her utmost to fight the temptations of the devil in order to avoid hell.

In Luther's *Sermo* hell is more directly present as a mental image throughout the text. But in spite of this increased argumentative presence, the religious function of hell is evidently reduced. In Luther's rhetoric, hell is granted no status on its own in his spiritual advice to the dying person. Hell has to be envisaged not as a danger or power or threat in itself, but only through the present reality or power of heaven. And the reality of heaven is present and powerful because it is, according to Luther, to be regarded as certain. The Late Medieval uncertainty of salvation is replaced by the Reformation certainty of salvation. This certainty is granted through the words and signs of God, present to the dying person in the sacraments.²¹ In this perspective, hell becomes less important and less relevant as a religious topic.

If Luther's *Sermo* expresses a fundamental Protestant position with regard to the religious function of hell, several questions remain unanswered. To mention just a few: to what extent did this kind of thinking, feeling and acting have an impact on ordinary Christians in Protestant societies? Did hell really lose in significance in early Protestantism?²² And on a broader Protestant basis: what was the develop-

²¹) This is a way of thinking deeply rooted in Nominalist theology, for instance in the works of Gabriel Biel, which were studied carefully by the young Luther during his years as a student in Erfurt. On Biel, see n.2.

²²) The reduced importance of hell in early Protestant religion is indicated in Marshall 2002, especially chapter 5: "The Estate of the Dead: Afterlife in Protestant Imagination" (188–231). Hell seems to play no important role in the sources analyzed by Marshall, and on p. 201 he states: "... there seems to have been a broad cultural presumption in

ment in Calvinist Protestantism, where the question of the certainty and uncertainty of salvation was treated in a way different from Luther? In spite of open questions like these, the fundamental change with regard to the function of hell that can be recognized in Luther's *Sermo* is noteworthy, not least due to the broad distribution of the text.²³ The text was written not for academic, but for general use, and it can also be presumed that it contributed significantly to transforming Protestant attitudes to hell.

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later Reformation England that salvation was widely accessible.” It is important to underline that this description is concerned with the situation in the late 16th and the early 17th centuries. Later on, in Pietist and Puritan Protestantism, the picture is quite different.

²³) See n.1.

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Three Functions of Hell in the Hindu Traditions

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Abstract

In this article are analysed three functions of hell in the Hindu traditions, a narrative, a social and an economic. Because of the strong images the narratives of hell contain, they are excellent means to catch the attention of the audience. The social function of hell is to protect the social order, the security of the people and especially to protect the privileges of those on top of the hierarchy. Since gifts to the priests are matched with specific punishments in hell that they release from, one economic function of hell seems to be as a source of income for the priests. However, it is argued that even though hell is both a textual and ritual reality in the Hindu traditions, its significance should not be exaggerated. Death is not the end of life, but the end of one rebirth, and release, *mokṣa*, is not about escaping a destiny in hell, but to gain freedom from the rebirth realms.

Keywords

Hinduism, hell, *Mahābhārata*, *Manusmṛti*, *Purāṇas*

Hinduism, that is, the Hindu traditions, is primarily a religion of this life. Religious life is to a large degree about power, auspiciousness and material welfare. Many religious activities are directed at improving one's conditions in this life. The world is in the centre in the Hindu traditions. Death is not the end of life, but the end of a rebirth. The next life is also here in this world. There are no common burial grounds in Hinduism because death is not a permanent condition. The ultimate goal of life according to many of the Hindu traditions, *mokṣa*, can mean many things. When *mokṣa* means final release, as it does in philosophical and theological texts, it is not about escaping a destiny in hell

(*niraya* or *naraka*), but to gain freedom from the cycle of rebirth in this world. In Hinduism, it is important to die a good death and possibly go to a heavenly world. Even though hell is both a textual and a ritual reality in the Hindu traditions, its significance should not be exaggerated. A balanced view is to be favored and this means that it is correct to emphasize that compared to the role of hell in the teaching of some other religions, hell is somewhat insignificant in Hinduism.¹

Naraka, *niraya* or hell is a possible destination after death, as a punishment for evil deeds, but not usually as a damnation caused by wrong faith as in the Western religions of Christianity and Islam. Hindu inclusivism can mean that all religions are considered as valid means leading to the same salvific goal. Hindu gurus who attract an international audience often encourage devotees not to change religion since it is not necessary and does not in itself serve any purpose.

Hell is not a permanent dwelling place, but a realm from which one returns after the punishment for moral impure deeds have been completed. There are many rebirth realms. Hell is a name for the worst place, a place of punishment for the most impure acts. Hell is like a prison. The prisoner does his time and is thereafter returned to society. Hell functions in binary opposition to heaven, *svarga*, but hell is not in binary opposition to the highest salvific goal, as in Christianity and Islam. Hell is not a contrast to *mokṣa*, final liberation. Life in this world is in binary opposition to *mokṣa*.

According to views representative of the textual traditions, when the moral impurities are washed off by the punishments in hell, one is after some time reborn as an animal and thereafter as a human. According to other views, found both in the oral traditions and in the *Mahābhārata*, when you have done your time in hell you are born in heaven (Crook 1926:146). Heaven is, according to these views, also just a place from where one returns after the merit of the good deeds has been used up.

¹) Hell, *niraya* or *naraka* are often not index words in introduction texts on Hinduism. If they are mentioned in the text, only a few sentences are offered to explain their meaning. Hells are usually mentioned as part of the Purāṇic cosmology. To give two examples: Flood (1966) makes two short references to hell, one as a punishment mentioned in *Manusmṛti* (64) and one in the section on Purāṇic cosmology (112). Klostermaier (1994) refers to 28 hells in his description of Purāṇic cosmology (122), but he does not elaborate. In their judgement, the hells are obviously of minor importance.

After a period in heaven or hell there is a new rebirth. But, as it is said in the *Mahābhārata*, all the heavens of the gods are hells compared to the place of Brahman (12.198.6), the place or state associated with *mokṣa*.

Hell might be distinguished from the rebirth realms in that it is often not conceived of as a rebirth, but persons are given specific bodies for the punishment in hell. There is no reproduction in hell and no one is born there. In that sense it is not part of the rebirth realm. Two views of the afterlife coexist in Hinduism: the concept of heaven and hell and the concept of rebirth. They have different origins and they are not brought into a coherent system, and thus contradictory conceptions of death and the afterlife exist in the Hindu traditions.² The ideas of karma and reincarnation assume a more or less immediate rebirth. The death ritual, the *śrāddha*, assumes that the dead will spend a year on his way to the world of the ancestors to gradually gain an ancestor body. The *śrāddha* functions to feed the dead so that the one year travel to the world of the ancestors is successful and make sure that the dead do not stay around as a ghost (*bhūta*) but move on. The fear of ghosts has probably been more important than the fear of hell in Hindu religious life. The rituals around death focus on the successful transfer of the dead to another world.

The god of death in Vedic religion was Yama. He was the ruler of the realm of the ancestors. In the *Mahābhārata*, Yama is described as a god of *dharma* (Winternitz 1981). Later he is associated mostly with death, and the fear of him and his messenger Citragupta who keeps a record of every person's good and bad deeds, is particularly associated with hell.

In the following I look at hell in three categories of Hindu texts: the Epics (*Mahābhārata*), the *Dharmasūtras* and *Dharmaśāstras* (*Manusmṛiti*), and the *Purāṇas* (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, *Garuḍa Purāṇa*). Three different functions of hell are disclosed in these texts: hell as a powerful narrative theme, hell as an aspect of the social order and hell as a source of income, that is, the narrative, the social and the economic dimensions of hell.

² A. B. Keith in his book *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and the Upanishads* (1925) wrote: "The modern view of the spirits and their abode is extremely varied and confused, and it would be ill-judged to assume that it was otherwise in the earlier Vedic religion" (403).

Hell in the *Mahābhārata*

The dramatic narrative of the *Mahābhārata* ends with Yudhiṣṭhira's visit to hell (in the last books *Mahāprasthāna parvan* and *Svargārohaṇa parvan*). Hell is here a powerful narrative theme, which adds a surprising twist to the story and thus assists the narrator to keep the attention of his audience.

At the end of the war the five Pāṇḍava brothers, Draupadī and a dog leave the world to go to the Himālaya and the Mount Meru. While going there, all of them fall down to earth, one after the other, except Yudhiṣṭhira and the dog. Yudhiṣṭhira, who is the king of *dharma*, explains why they fall. Draupadī, the common wife of the five brothers, falls because even though the five brothers treated her equally, she favoured Dhanaṃjaya, that is, Arjuna. Of the two youngest brothers, Sahadeva falls because he never considered anyone his equal in wisdom, and Nakula because he never considered anyone equal to himself in beauty. Arjuna falls because he had said he would destroy all his enemies in one day, but he did not accomplish what he had said he would do. Bhīma falls because he never attended to the needs of others while he ate. So Yudhiṣṭhira proceeds with only the company of the dog. Yudhiṣṭhira is then picked up by Indra, who wants to bring him to heaven. But Yudhiṣṭhira objects that he will not go to heaven without Draupadī and his brothers. Indra promises him that he will meet them in heaven. He then declares that he will not go without the dog, which is very devoted to him. Indra says: "There is no place in Heaven for persons with dogs." But Yudhiṣṭhira counters that one should not abandon someone who is devoted to you. Therefore he will not commit that sin in order to go to heaven. Yudhiṣṭhira refuses to abandon the dog. He declares that to frighten one that has sought protection, to kill a woman, to steal from a Brāhmaṇa, to injure a friend and to abandon one that is devoted to you, are sins. The dog is then transformed into the god of *dharma*. This admirable act, the renouncement of heaven for one who is devoted to you, makes the god of *dharma* announce that there is no one in heaven equal to Yudhiṣṭhira.

After having attained heaven, Yudhiṣṭhira wanted to know what had happened to his brothers the Pāṇḍavas, Draupadī and the Kauravas, the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. When he arrived in heaven (*svarga*) he saw Duryodhana, who was shining like the sun and was in the company of

many gods. Yudhiṣṭhira became enraged and exclaimed that he would not want to stay at this place if Duryodhana was here. It was because of Duryodhana his relatives and friends were killed in large numbers. Yudhiṣṭhira then decided that he wanted to go where his brothers were. Nārada explained that Duryodhana attained heaven because he performed the *kṣatriya* duties. And Nārada criticized Yudhiṣṭhira: This is heaven and there can be no animosity here! Yudhiṣṭhira continues the dispute and declares that where his brothers are, there is heaven and not this place. The gods state that if he wants to go to his brothers, the celestial messenger, Nārada, will immediately take him there. Yudhiṣṭhira is then taken to hell. The *Mahābhārata* says:

The path was inauspicious and difficult and trodden by men of sinful deeds. It was enveloped in thick darkness, and covered with hair and moss forming its grassy vesture. Polluted with the stench of sinners, and miry with flesh and blood, it abounded with gadflies and stinging bees and gnats and was endangered by the inroads of grisly bears. Rotting corpses lay here and there. Overspread with bones and hair, it was noisome with worms and insects. It was skirted all along with a blazing fire. It was infested by crows and other birds and vultures, all having beaks of iron, as also by evil spirits with long mouths pointed like needles. . . . Human corpses were scattered over it, smeared with fat and blood, with arms and thighs cut off, or with entrails torn out and legs severed. (*Svargārohaṇa parvan* 2; Ganguli 1991, ch. 2, p. 3)

The description is reminiscent of a battle scene a few days after the battle. Yudhiṣṭhira watched people being tortured and asked how long they would continue on a path like this. Nārada explained that he would not go farther, but if Yudhiṣṭhira wanted, he could either return with him or proceed further. Full of sorrow, Yudhiṣṭhira decided to return. But just as he turned around, many voices started to talk to him, asking him to stay. And Yudhiṣṭhira recognized the voices of his brothers and Draupadī. Shocked, Yudhiṣṭhira asked: “What bizarre destiny is this? What have these done to attain hell, and Duryodhana and the Kauravas, what good deeds did they perform to attain Heaven?” Yudhiṣṭhira reflected for a while and then told Nārada that he would not return to heaven but stay in hell with his brothers and wife. Within a moment all the gods of heaven arrived. The darkness and all the painful sights and inflictions disappeared. Indra said:

Hell, oh son, should undoubtedly be seen by every king. Of both good and bad there is abundance, oh leader of men. He who enjoys first the fruits of his good acts must afterwards endure Hell. He, on the other hand, who first endures Hell, must afterwards enjoy Heaven. He whose sinful acts are many, enjoys Heaven first. (*Svargārohaṇa parvan* 3; Ganguli 1991, ch. 2, p. 5)

Indra repeats several times that all kings must see hell as Yudhiṣṭhira had. This point gives the final part of the story an interesting unexpected twist that manages to keep the listeners' attention. This might very well have been its function. The idea is not common in the ritual tradition. The view that the evil person goes first to heaven and then to hell, whereas the good person goes first to hell and then to heaven, might also point to the difficulty of *dharma*, which is the main theme of the *Mahābhārata*. The idea also has a message of tolerance. Because everyone has done some evil and everyone has done some good, no one is perfectly good and no one is totally evil. No one is perfect in this world. This could be a Hindu message of tolerance. But the primary function of the twist is probably that hell makes a good story. Hell is a powerful narrative theme that catches the attention of the audience.

Hell in *Manusmṛti*

In *Manusmṛti*, hell is primarily a punishment for crime (*pātaka*). In the Hindu traditions there are standard lists of hells although their number varies. *Manusmṛti* lists 21 hells to which one goes who accepts gifts from a greedy king who does not follow *dharma* (4.87–90). Therefore a brāhmaṇa should not accept gifts from kings. The names of the hells are:

- Darkness (*tāmisra*)
- Blind Darkness (*andhatāmisra*)
- Belonging to the Great Spotted Dear (*mahāraurava*)
- Belonging to the Dear (*raurava*)
- The Thread of Time (*kālasūtra*)
- The Great Hell (*mahānaraka*)
- Vivifying (*saṃjīvana*)
- The Great Washing Away (*mahāvīci*)
- Burning (*tapana*)
- Excessive Burning (*sampratāpana*)

Crushing (*saṃhāta*)
 Joined with the Raven (*sakākola*)
 Shut up like a Bud (*kuḍmala*)
 Stinking Earth (*pūtimṛttika*)
 Iron Spike (*lohaśaṅku*)
 Dregs (*rjīṣa*)
 Impelling (*panthāna*)
 Thorny River (*śālmalinadī*)
 Forest of Sword Leaves (*asipatravana*)
 Tearing with Iron (*lohadāraka*)

No systematic description of these hells is found in *Manusmṛti*. For this we may resort to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. In *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 5.26.7 the names of 21 plus 7 hells are listed, all together 28. Some of the names are the same, others are different. In the descriptions of the hells, evil deeds are correlated with the appropriate punishments. According to *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, hells are for those who kill animals or treat animals badly, steal or lie, break the rules of behavior for the *varṇas* such as becoming angry at guests, or a rich person who is stingy, or someone who joins heretic sects. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* says that Darkness (*tāmisra*) is the place for those who steal another person's wealth, children or wife. The torments of this hell are denial of food and water and torments till he becomes unconscious (5.26.8). Blind Darkness (*andhatāmisra*) is for those who enjoy the wife, property and so on of other persons as their own. In this hell persons lose their sight and consciousness (5.26.9). To the hell Belonging to the Dear (*raurava*) come those who wrongly identify their body with their soul and regard the wealth, wife, etc. as his own and nourishes his family by treating other people bad. In this hell they are tortured by beings called Ruru, beings more evil than snakes (5.26.10–11). Belonging to the Great Spotted Dear (*mahāraurava*) is for those who nurture their bodies by unscrupulous means. In this hell are flesh-eating Rurus (5.26.12). In the hell Cooking Vessel (*kumbhīpāka*) Yama's servants boil those in oil who cooked living beasts or birds in this world (5.26.13). Those who bear malice towards parents, brāhmaṇas and the Vedas end up in the hell The Thread of Time (*kālasūtra*). Beings here are fried on copper plates (5.26.14).

It is noteworthy that in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is found also a hell that is a punishment for embracing a heretical creed. The hell Forest of

Sword Leaves (*asipatravana*) is for those who abandoned their Vedic ways and embraced a heretical sect (5.26.15). In this hell people are whipped, and while they run they are cut down by swords. This view is a characteristic of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.

The Pig's Mouth hell (*sūkaramukha*) is for kings who inflict punishment on those who do not deserve it, or on brāhmaṇas. Those punished here are crushed by powerful hands (5.26.16.). The hell Overgrown Well (*andhakūpa*) is for those who understand the agony of others, but cause pain to animals who feed on human bodies and are incapable of being aware of causing pains to others (5.26.17). Beings in this hell are troubled by all kinds of animals. The hell Feeding on Worms (*kṛmibhojana*) is for those who eat whatever they come by without sharing with others. This hell is a pool of worms that feed on them, and they continue to eat worms (5.26.18). Verse 5.26.37 says that there are hundreds and thousands of similar hells in the abode of Yama and that only some have been described in this text.

One would expect that *Manusmṛti* would mention hell (*naraka*) quite often. *Manusmṛti* is a conservative Dharma text, which protects the interest of the *varṇāśramadharmā* and the interests of the Brahmins. A main purpose of the text was to equate the priestly and Vedic authority (Doniger and Smith 1991). Hell is mentioned in the verses 2.116, 3.172, 3.249, 4.81, 4.84–90, 4.165, 4.197, 4.235, 6.61, 6.84, 8.75, 8.127, 8.307, 8.313, 9.138, 11.37, 12.16–22, 12.54, 12.73–81. However, *Manusmṛti*'s first chapter (1.26–50) establishes the law of karma and places the classes of beings, human and animals, within it, and it ends (12.40–81) with an exposition of the law of karma to explain how, depending on their past action, people are reborn as various classes of beings, in particular as gods, humans and animals. Hell is not part of this rebirth realm. Beings dominated by *sattva* become gods, beings dominated by *rajas* become humans and beings dominated *tamas* become animals, that is the threefold existence (12.40). *Sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are Sāṃkhya categories. In the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* (54) the concept of beings from Brahmā to the blade of grass (*brahmādistāmbapary-antah*) is meant to include all beings. No hell is mentioned. Each of these realms is again threefold. When hell is mentioned in the *Manusmṛti*, hell is added as the worst punishment, as if the worst rebirths are not punishment enough. Verses 12.54–55 say that those

who commit major crimes spend a great many years in terrible hells, and when that is over, they experience the following transmigrations: the priest killer gets the womb of a dog, a pig, a donkey, a camel, a cow, a goat, a sheep, a wild animal, a bird, a fierce untouchable and a tribal. It continues to specify the appropriate rebirth for each crime or impure behaviour, such as drinking, or those who slip from the duties of their *varṇa* (class) (12.70–72). Many of these acts are crimes, but others, such as being in company of bad people, are not. Persons who do not follow the dharma of their class are also punished with a bad rebirth. Hell is described in other verses: Yama is the ruler of the realm of death and he assigns punishment. The person who does most right and little wrong comes to heaven, one who does mostly wrong and a few things right ends up in hell (12.22). 12.16 says that after death, the person who has done much wrong gets a new solid body designed to be tortured, and Yama organizes the torture. One who acquires the Veda without permission from someone who recites is a thief of the Veda and goes to hell (2.116). The function of hell here is to protect the hierarchical society and in particular the privileges of the Brahmins.

Hell is a punishment for a crime (*pātaka*), but having performed a crime, one can become free from the evil by performing a vow (*kṛcchra*). A number of vows are prescribed. Many crimes are mentioned in the *Manusmṛti*, and the appropriate vow for each of them mentioned. Some of the vows are extremely harsh, but verse 11.260 states: But if a man fasts diligently for three days and goes down into the water three times a day, chanting the “Error-erasing Hymn,” he is freed from all crimes. Just as the horse sacrifice, the king of sacrifices, dispels all evil, even so the “Error-erasing Hymn” dispels all evil (11.261). Only crimes that are not done penance for have karmic consequences.

Hell According to *Garuḍa Purāṇa*

The most important text for the death rituals of the Hindu traditions is the *Pretakhanda* of the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*. This text is found in many editions with many textual differences between the editions (Rocher 1986). This shows that there has been a continuous demand for the text. The text is used by the priests in the *śrāddha* rituals, the rituals to

secure the dead a safe travel to its next existence.³ About *Garuḍa Purāṇa* Monier-Williams wrote:

Perhaps the best authority for the present creed of the Hindus in regard to the future state of the soul, and the best guide to the right performance of funeral Śrāddha ceremonies, is the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*... portions of it are recited at funerals and Śrāddhas in the present day. (Monier-Williams 1891:288; quoted in Rocher 1986:178)

The date of the composition of the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* is perhaps the 10th century.⁴ However, the three parts of the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* are independent texts. The *Pretakhanda* was added later. The *Pretakhanda* is read in the Hindu śrāddha rituals and not usually at other occasions. A summary of the *Pretakhanda*, the *Garuḍa Purāṇa Sāroddhāra* (“compilation of the essence of the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*”) is also in use. In his “Introduction” to the *Garuḍa Purāṇa Sāroddhāra*, Sris Chandra Vasu notes that this text is used all over India at funeral ceremonies, but that some are afraid to read it on other occasions thinking it inauspicious (*Garuḍa Purāṇa Sāroddhāra*, p. i). Vasu complains that the cognate belief in heaven and hell are very vague and he states that he wants to revive the idea. “Nervous persons,” he writes, “have always fought shy studying this unpleasant department of existence. But pleasant or unpleasant, the science does not take into account human feelings. No one is forced to study the subject, unless he feels strong enough to do so, as no one is bound to study Medicine, unless he is prepared to face the science of the dissecting room” (ibid.). His complaint about the lack of knowledge about hell among Hindus confirms, perhaps, its minor significance, even though when contemplating death, for many Hindus the fear of death can include the fear of hell. The author’s interest in spreading the knowledge of hell probably did not have much success.

In the descriptions of the funeral ceremony in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, hell is an important element. The most important contribution of this text is the elaboration of the view that activities that will lead to hell can

³) Jonathan P. Parry (1994:30) writes that his informants in his study of death in Benares continuously referred to this text.

⁴) Rocher 1986:177. Rocher notes that there are great textual differences between the editions.

be nullified by means of gifts to the priest. In *Manusmṛiti* the function of hell was to maintain a social order, to guard the privileges of the *brāhmaṇas* and protect society from behavior that is not socially approved or accepted. But when the person is dead, or almost dead, which is the case when the *śrāddha* rituals are performed, the above functions no longer operate, and the point is to secure that the person does not have to pay a visit to hell. For each crime, a gift to the priests is specified. The function of hell is now to secure the economic interests of the priests. In Hinduism, the status of the dead person can be changed by means of rituals after the person has died. The *śrāddha* ritual is performed to secure the successful transfer of the dead to the next world.

According to *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, when persons who are supposed to go to hell die, the ferocious, foul smelling messengers of Yama come with clubs and sticks in their hands to take them to hell. When the sinners have exhausted the fruits of their action in hell, the *jīvas* are reborn (2.2.60). The *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, does not say anything more about hell at this place. Instead, the text starts listing rebirth in the animal realm according to each crime. Only in the next chapter comes the description of hells (2.3). The text repeats the well-known view that there are thousands of hells and that it is not possible to describe all of them in detail (2.3.3). Seven main hells and 28 minor hells are described. After being punished by Yama in the hells, the *jīvas* again enter the rebirth realm, starting at the bottom as plants or insects. The description stops in verse 2.3.85. Then start the descriptions of the heavens.

The following chapter (2.4) is important and presents the doctrine of atonements and gifts. It states that every morally impure act a human commits, consciously or unconsciously, stands in need of purification by means of atonement (2.4.1). One who performs a morally impure act should perform ten types of bath, and then donate ten gifts. These gifts are: cow, earth, gingelly seeds, gold, butter, cloth, grains, sugar, silver and salt (2.4.4).

He should make these gifts to those who have come during atonement. Then to cross the river of hell (*Vaitaraṇi*) full of pus and blood, at Yama's door he should donate the *Vaitaraṇi* cow. (2.4.5)

Gingelly seeds, iron, gold, cotton, salt, seven grains, earth and cow — these are all pure. These eight gifts should be given to a learned *brāhmaṇa* by the dying person. (2.4.7–8)

The text goes on to list a type of gifts called *pada*: Umbrella, shoes, clothes, ring, gourd, seat, vessel, and food.

A vessel full of gingelly seeds or butter and a bed with all its equipment should be gifted or all those articles which are liked by the donor.

Horse, chariot, she-buffalo, fan and cloth — all these should be given to the brāhmaṇas (2.4.10–11).

Oh Lord, these gifts and others should be given as far as possible. He who has done atonement, given ten gifts on this earth, or the gift of a Vaitaraṇī cow or eight gifts or the gift of the vessel full of gingelly seeds or clarified butter or the gift of bed or of *pada*, as prescribed in the *śāstras* does not go to hell. (2.4.12–14)

Whatever gift a man has given himself, they all count in his favour (at the hour of death). (2.4.16)

Oh bird, the man who has completed atonement in all its parts is placed in Heaven, after all his sins are washed away. (2.14.17)

In the next verses are specified the results of many of the gifts and the gifts are assigned specific functions. The giver of the cow gains immortality since the cow's milk is nectar. He who gives an umbrella gets shelter even in the hell called Raudra, where the persons are burned. If he gives an umbrella, he encounters the comforting shade in the way (2.4.20). If he gives shoes, he passes through the hell Forest of Sword Leaves (*asipatravana*) on a horse (2.4.21). If he gifts food and a seat, he eats sitting comfortably on the way; if he gifts a water jar, he feels comfortable even in the waterless hell region (2.4.22). He who gives clothes and ornaments is not tortured by the fierce messengers of Yama, who are black and yellow in colour (2.4.23). If a vessel full of gingelly seeds is donated to a brāhmaṇa, it destroys all the three types of moral impurities born from his speech, body and mind (2.4.24). If he gives a vessel full of clarified butter, he stays in Rudraloka. If he gifts a bed along with all its equipment, he rides in an aerial car in the company of fairies and enjoys the heaven of Indra for sixty thousand years (2.4.25). Moreover,

He who gifts a young faultless horse along with all equipment to a brāhmaṇa lives in heaven, Oh bird, for years equal to the number of hair on the body of a horse. (2.4.27–28)

If he gives a chariot drawn by four horses along the contiguous equipment to a learned brāhmaṇa, he reaps the benefit of performing a Rājasūya. (2.4.29–30)

The list of gifts and rewards continues till 2.4.33. The final verse states that “there is a difference in result according to gifts” (2.4.34). The idea of hell here functions quite blatantly as source of income for the priests. After listing the gifts, the other ways to liberation are mentioned:

If he accepts *sannyāsa* as prescribed in the sacred texts, he is not reborn but is merged with Brahman itself.

If he dies at a sacred place, he attains *mokṣa* after dying there. If he dies on the way, each and every step he has taken in reaching this place procures for him the fruit of performing a sacrifice. (2.4.38)

If he undertakes a fast unto death, he does not return to this world, oh bird. (2.4.39)

That ends the section of gifts in the *Pretakhaṇḍa* of the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*. Then starts the treatment of the details of the cremation ritual, the *śrāddha*, which is about the release of the dead from the state of the *preta*, which does not have to concern us here. But the description of hell is taken up again in 2.5.81. Here, the travel of the morally impure dead is described while he consumes the monthly *pinḍa* gift and travels through terrible places. It is told that the dead regrets the gifts he did not give, the pilgrimage he did not performed, the asceticism he did not do.

Neither you offered gifts, nor gave oblations, nor performed penance nor undertook bath nor rendered a good act. So, oh foolish creature, now suffer for whatever act you have done. (2.5.129)

After the end of a year, in which the dead has been given a monthly *pinḍa*, the dead assumes a body composed of the essence of his merit from the gifts of the rice balls (*pinḍas*). He then reaches the city of Yama. The doorkeepers are angry if the *pinḍas* have not been performed. There he sees Yama,

with red eyes, looking fierce like a heap of collyrium, with fierce jaws and frowning fiercely, chosen as their lord by many ugly, fierce-faced hundreds of diseases,

possessing an iron-rod in his hand and also a noose. The creature goes either to the good or to a bad state as directed by him. (2.5.147–49).

A morally impure goes to a bad state, as I have told you before. Those who give umbrella, shoes and shelter see Yama as gentle-faced with ear-rings and a shining crest. In the *śrāddha* of the eleventh and twelfth month many brāhmaṇas should be feasted because then the deceased is very hungry. (2.5.150–52)

Thus I have told you how one goes to Yama's abode. (2.5.153)

A further explanation of how a soul gets a new body is given in 2.10.74–89. The soul (*jīva*) is the size of a thumb. After leaving the body, the soul obtains an airy body. Then the *piṇḍas* offered him by the sons or relatives unite with the *vājuja* body. This happens when the *jīva* reaches Yamaloka. Here he obtains the *piṇḍaja* body and, as directed by Citra-gupta, the messenger of Yama, he then suffers in hell. Having been tortured there, he is born as animal (2.10.88–89). Also this rebirth is a punishment of the *jīva* for acts in previous lives.

Morally impure acts, atonements, gifts to the brāhmaṇas and the idea of hell belong together. After punishment in hell, the *jīva* enters the karma and rebirth system. According to this rebirth system, the *jīva* is reborn as an animal, a human or a divinity according to which part of *prakṛti* is dominant: *sattva* gives rebirth as a divinity, *rajas* as a human, *tamas* as an animal. One main function of hell in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* seems to be to serve the economic interests of the brāhmaṇas. That a function of hell is to feed brāhmaṇas is stated unashamedly in the following verse:

If before sunset wealth is not distributed among the suppliants, I do not know to whom it will go in the morning that follows. If some wealth is not handed over to Brahmins and friends or spent in holy rites or pilgrimages, the wealth begins to cry “who shall be my lord?” Whether plentiful or scanty, whatever wealth one has is due to one's previous merits. Realizing this, one has to spend it in virtuous rites. It is by wealth that virtue is sustained if the mind is sanctified by faith. (2.11.28–33)

The text finally states that a sacred ritual devoid of faith is neither fruitful here nor there. It is by faith virtue is sustained and not by heaps of riches. This might very well be so, but gifts nevertheless seem to be a main interest of the text.

Conclusion

I have argued here that three functions of hell can be distinguished in the Hindu traditions, a narrative, a social and an economic one. First, hell is a powerful narrative element because of the strong images of evil it contains. Evil entertains. Hell simply makes a good story. Second, hell functions for the protection of the social order, the security of the people and especially for the protection of the privileges of those on top of the hierarchy, the priestly class. Third, the concept of hell functions as a source of income for the priests. Gifts to the priests are matched with specific punishments in hell that they release from.

Hell is both a textual and a ritual reality in the Hindu traditions. Hell does have narrative, social and economic dimensions, but it is important not to lose track of the big picture. In a list of everyday religious concerns of most Hindus, ideas about hell would probably not be among those on the top. But sociological research is needed to be able to be more specific on this topic.

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Islamic Hell

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Abstract

Ideas about punishment in hell (the Fire, *Jahannam*) have an important place both in the Qur'an and in later Muslim literature. The article surveys the scenarios of hell given in these sources and discusses the various functions of hell-talk in Islamic discourse. In particular, a tension exists between conceiving hell as a place of punishment for sins and as a place reserved for disbelievers, or non-Muslims. The two perspectives meet in the idea that disbelief (*kufi*) is the worst of all sins, though ambiguities regarding who belong in hell remain. Strategies to mediate this ambiguity are found in the ideas that hell is divided into several levels or that the punishment in hell is only temporary.

Keywords

hell in Islam, *Jahannam*, Kafir, eternity of hell

The doctrine of hell forms an integral part of Islamic theology. It is an essential aspect of the belief in the Day of Judgment, which is one of the six or so fundamental tenets by which the Muslim faith is traditionally defined.¹ According to this doctrine, when the day of reckoning

¹ The belief in Allah, his angels, his books, his messengers, the Last Day and the "decree" (predestination). The first five items are always included; after them, the list is usually expanded with other points of doctrine. For an early, representative example, see the *Fiqh Akbar II*, art. 1: "The heart of the confession of the unity of Allah and the true foundation of faith consists in this obligatory creed: I believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His Apostles, the resurrection after death, the decree of Allah the good and the evil thereof, computation of sins, the balance, Paradise and Hell; and that all these are real" (quoted from Wensinck 1932:188).

comes, each person will be judged according to his beliefs and deeds. The believers and the righteous will be admitted to the Garden, whereas the disbelievers and the wicked will be thrown into the Fire.

There are numerous references to hell in the Qur'an — nearly five hundred altogether. In the subsequent history of Islam, the indications given by the Holy Book about hell were often expanded, and several problematic issues were discussed. In this paper, an attempt will be made to survey the most important features of the qur'anic ideas about hell, as well as those found in later Islamic theology. An exhaustive treatment will not be aimed at in this brief article — not only because of constraints of space, but also because the subject has not been extensively studied in recent scholarship.²

The topic of a particular religion's ideas about hell regularly invites certain basic questions such as "What's it like?" and "Who goes there?" The Islamic answers to these questions will appear in the course of this article. More specifically, however, I shall also try to give some answers to the somewhat less simple question which is the theme of this issue: the *uses* of hell; or, What purpose does talking about hell serve in the discourses that employ that idea? To this question, the answers are less than clear-cut; in fact, it seems a plausible hypothesis to assume that the purpose and function of hell-talk have not always been the same throughout Islamic history but have changed according to the circumstances. A few ideas in this regard will be offered in what follows.

Hell in the Qur'an

It is inevitable to start with the Qur'an. A couple of samples will give an impression of the tenor of the qur'anic discourse about hell:

Surely the day of decision is (a day) appointed:
The day on which the trumpet shall be blown so you shall come forth in hosts,
And the heaven shall be opened so that it shall be all openings,

²⁾ The only monograph on the subject I know of is Meyer 1901, which is based on a limited range of sources. Much relevant material is provided by Smith and Haddad 1981, which will be drawn upon frequently in this article; important as well is Asín Palacios 1968, 1984. A brief, recent survey, with bibliography, is found in Gwynne 2002.

And the mountains shall be moved off so that they shall remain a mere semblance.
 Surely hell lies in wait,
 A place of resort for the inordinate,
 Living therein for ages.
 They shall not taste therein cool nor drink
 But boiling and intensely cold water,
 Requital corresponding.
 Surely they feared not the account,
 And called Our communications a lie, giving the lie (to the truth).
 And We have recorded everything in a book,
 So taste! For We will not add to you aught but chastisement. (78:17–30; Shakir trans.)

... those who disbelieve, for them are cut out garments of fire, boiling water shall be poured over their heads.
 With it shall be melted what is in their bellies and (their) skins as well.
 And for them are whips of iron.
 Whenever they will desire to go forth from it, from grief, they shall be turned back into it, and taste the chastisement of burning. (22:19–22)

Several names are used for hell in the Qur'an (see especially O'Shaughnessy 1961). As a proper name *Jahannam* often occurs — derived from the Hebrew *Gē Hinnôm*.³ Even more frequently, however, hell is referred to by its most salient characteristic and is simply named “the Fire” (*al-nār*), and this is also the most usual designation for hell in Islamic literature generally. Several other terms expand on the idea of fire: hell is called *al-sā'ir*, “the blaze,” *al-jahīm*, “the hot place,” *al-laẓā*, “the flame,” etc. It is a fire that punishes by inflicting torments: “(As for) those who disbelieve in Our communications, We shall make them enter fire; so oft as their skins are thoroughly burned, We will change them for other skins, that they may taste the chastisement; surely Allah is Mighty, Wise” (4:56). The fire also consumes: it is “the fire of which men and stones are the fuel; it is prepared for the disbelievers” (2:24).

The inmates of hell will also be punished by having to eat fire (2:174), or they will drink boiling water (6:70), or melted brass, or their drink will be bitter cold, unclean, full of pus (Gwynne 2002:416a). Their food will be the heads of devils that hang from the evil tree *Zaqqūm*

³ From a linguistic point of view, however, the name seems to have been transmitted via Ethiopic: Jeffery 1938:105–6; O'Shaughnessy 1961:454.

growing at the bottom of hell (37:62–66; 44:43–46). In spite of this nourishment, the inmates of hell will be constantly thirsty and hungry.

Skin sensation and digestion thus seem to be the two favourite themes in the Qur'an's description of the infernal torments. However, the psychological terrors are at least as painful as the corporeal torments. It is a humiliating punishment (3:178). All around one will be hearing "sighs and sobs" (11:106). It is an eternal punishment, for the Lord will not allow them ever to die (35:36).

It is clear, moreover, that hell is a prison: the people there have chains around their necks (13:5, 34:33 36:8, 76:4, etc.), and they are fettered by hooks of iron (22:21). They are guarded by merciless angels (66:6), nineteen in number (74:30–31), at their head stands a ruler (43:77: *mālik*, interpreted as a proper name in later tradition). These angels are clearly appointed for their task by Allah; they are not devils, and Iblis himself is not the ruler of hell — rather, he will himself be punished there (17:63, 38:85; Gwynne 2002:417).

Who, then, will be punished in the Fire? Most typically, it is the disbelievers, *al-kāfirūn*. Idolaters will end up in the Fire, we are told (10:24). More specifically, apostates (3:86–87) and hypocrites (4:140) are also assured of a painful retribution. Also, the arrogant and haughty will face a humiliating punishment, that is, all those who have not submitted to Allah and heeded the warnings of his messengers. Thus, one may say that, on a general level, the threat of infernal punishment is directed against all those who reject the message of the Prophet, openly or covertly, in other words, persisting idolaters, apostates or hypocrites. The condemnation to hell of the arrogant (*istakbara* 7:36.40.48) appears to be closely associated with this general category, since the attitude of being arrogant clearly implies not having submitted oneself to God, i.e. not being a *muslim* (cf. Abu Zayd 2001). Similar to this is the case of people who are self-content, satisfied with the things of the world (10:7–8, 17:18). In both cases, the condemnation to hell results not simply from a moral defect but ultimately from a religious fault, in the qur'anic sense of "religion" as showing awareness of and gratitude to the Creator.

Also attested, however, are several cases of condemnation to the Fire for specific offences. Some of these concern the rejection of specific tenets of faith, such as denying the divine origin of the Qur'an (74:16–

26), or the reality of the Day of Judgment (25:11–14). Other kinds of behaviour that lead to hell are serious criminal offences, such as the murder of a believer (4:93, cf. 29–30, 3:21), eating up the property of orphans (4:10), practising usury after God has explicitly forbidden it (2:275), or slander (104), particularly slandering chaste women (24:23).

Now, what may be said about the general purpose and function of the hell-fire threat in the Qur'an? One rather obvious observation that can be made is that threatening the audience with eternal torment if they don't believe what they are being told serves as a rhetorical amplifier: the threat is intended to add to the persuasiveness of the prophetic announcement.⁴ On the other hand, the function of qur'anic hell-talk cannot be reduced to this relatively trivial point. The doctrine about the coming judgment, and the sorting of humans for either Paradise or hell, obviously formed an integral part of the total package of the message of Islam that Muhammad thought he had inherited from the tradition of prophets. To warn about the consequences of not acknowledging the one true god, and of acting unjustly, was an essential aspect of the prophetic role, as Muhammad conceived it, from the start.⁵ On the other hand, once the prophetic mission was in progress, the frequent reminders of the painful consequences for those who were not yet persuaded naturally served to amplify the authority of Muhammad himself.

Another important function of the qur'anic discourse about hell is that it is an element in the construction of social boundaries leading to the formation of a new community — that of the believers, the *mu'minūn*, or the submitters, the *muslimūn*. It is noteworthy that the descriptions of the torments of hell-fire often occur in symmetrical antithesis to the descriptions of the blessings of Paradise.⁶ If the texts highlight the terrible food and drink of the inmates of hell, and the pains suffered by their bodies, this is done in order to contrast the conditions of hell with the delightful food and drink that will be served to

⁴) Conversely, the same is, of course, the case with the promise of a reward for the believers.

⁵) This is clear from the way in which the doctrine of the Last Judgment is routinely added to those of God, angels, messengers and books in such texts as 2:177, 4:136.

⁶) The point is also made by Smith and Haddad 1981:86.

those lounging pleasantly on couches in Paradise. The description of the punishments is not an end in itself — as is the case with certain descriptions of hell in later Christian and Islamic traditions, where the authors sometimes seem to take an almost sadistic delight in detailing the torture and the sufferings awaiting the sinners. In the Qur'an, the descriptions of the Fire and the Garden most of all serve instead to distinguish, and to underline the contrast between, the two groups of believers and disbelievers. This social dimension of the eschatology is evident in the use of such a collective designation as *ashāb*, “the people of...,” to describe the inmates of the Fire and the Garden respectively: the *ashāb al-janna* are contrasted with the *ashāb al-nār*, for instance in 7:44: “And the dwellers of the garden will call out to the inmates of the fire: Surely *we* have found what our Lord promised us to be true; have *you too* found what your Lord promised to be true? They will say: Yes.” Thus, the contrasting prospects of heaven and hell serve in important ways to categorize people, and thereby to create social identity and religious-political allegiance.

A final function of hell in the Qur'an, however, concerns individuals. As was mentioned above, those who have committed grave crimes, such as murder, stealing from orphans, etc., are also condemned to hell. These statements serve to impose law and discipline within the already constituted Muslim community. Typically, they belong to the Medina period, after a Muslim state organized and led by Muhammad had come into being.

To sum up: The proclamations about hell in the Qur'an serve (1) to complete and confirm the image of Muhammad as a prophet, that is, of him being a member of a long tradition of prophets and messengers; (2) to add persuasive urgency to his message; (3) to categorize people as either Muslims or non-Muslims, and thereby to contribute to the establishment of Islam as a discrete social entity; (4) to discipline individual offenders within the Muslim community itself. However, between these various types of discourse involving hell there exist potential tensions. What, for instance, will be the fate of Jews, Christians and other “peoples of the Book”? Will they be counted among those who have heeded the warnings of the prophets in general, and thus be candidates for Paradise, or will they be punished in hell because they are not Muslims? Furthermore, what is the status of the grave Muslim sinner? If Muslims

go to Paradise as a matter of principle, because they are Muslims, has the Muslim sinner who goes to hell ceased to be a Muslim because of his sin? These are questions that later came to preoccupy Islamic theologians, and I shall return to them later in this paper. First, we shall take a brief look at the way the descriptions of hell itself were elaborated in later Muslim literature.

The Topography of Hell

One aspect that received considerable attention by later Muslim writers was the topography of hell. The Qur'an itself gives few details on this topic, though it does state, in 15:44, that Jahannam "has seven gates; for every gate there shall be a separate party of them" (that is, of those who have gone astray). A widespread interpretation of this verse, attested in a relatively early *ḥadīth*,⁷ was that hell had seven levels. Each of these levels came to be associated with one of the names employed for hell in the Qur'an, and to each level a specific category of inmates was assigned. The result was the following architecture:

1. *Jahannam*, reserved for Muslims who have committed grave sins;
2. *al-Lazā*, the Blaze, for the Jews;
3. *al-Ḥuṭama*, the Consuming Fire, for the Christians;
4. *al-Sa'ir*, the Flame, for the Sabaeans;
5. *al-Saqar*, the Scorching Fire, for the Zoroastrians;
6. *al-Jahīm*, the Hot Place, for the idolaters;
7. *al-Hāwiya*, the Abyss, for the hypocrites.⁸

It is interesting to note that a main motive in this elaboration is the placement in hell of the various non-Muslim groups, a fact which confirms the impression that an important function of the idea of hell in Islam is to effect identity construction and boundary demarcation

⁷ Asín Palacios (1984:138; 1968:88) dates it to the second century AH. Smith and Haddad (1981:83, 216 n.64) quote it from Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad* (Cairo 1895 ed., vol. IV, 14, 185 ff.).

⁸ See also e.g. Meier 1901:29–32; Asín Palacios 1984:138–39; 1968:88–89; Gardet 1967:328–29.

vis-à-vis “the other.” On the other hand, Islamic tradition also witnesses a different type of systematization, in which the various levels or regions of hell are distinguished in accordance with the types of sinners consigned to each of them and/or the types of punishments inflicted. Such descriptions are above all characteristic of the vast traditions recounting the *isrāʾ* and the *miʾrāj*, Muhammad’s night journey and ascension, where the Prophet not only ascends to heaven but is usually also given a tour of hell.⁹ To convey an impression of how the various sinners and their torments are described in these traditions, I quote the summary given by Asín Palacios (1968:13–14):

Hell... is formed of seven floors, one underneath the other. The uppermost, which is reserved for deadly sins, is subdivided into fourteen mansions, one close above the other, and each is a place of punishment for a different sin.

The first mansion is an ocean of fire comprising seventy lesser seas, and on the shore of each sea stands a city of fire. In each city are seventy thousand dwellings; in each dwelling, seventy thousand coffins of fire, the tombs of men and women, who, stung by snakes and scorpions, shriek in anguish. These wretches, the Keeper enlightens Mahomet, were tyrants.

In the second mansion beings with blubber lips writhe under the red-hot forks of demons, while serpents enter their mouths and eat their bodies from within. These are faithless guardians, devoured now by serpents even as they once devoured the inheritances committed to their trust. Lower down usurers stagger about, weighed down by the reptiles in their bellies. Further, shameless women hang by the hair that they had exposed to the gaze of man. Still further down liars and slanderers hang by their tongues from red-hot hooks lacerating their faces with nails of copper. Those who neglected the rites of prayer and ablution are now monsters with the head of dogs and the bodies of swine and are the food of serpents. In the next mansion drunkards suffer the torture of raging thirst, which demons affect to quench with cups of a liquid fire that burns their entrails. Still lower, hired mourners and professional women singers hang head downwards and howl with pain as devils cut their tongues with burning shears. Adulterers are punished in a cone-shaped furnace... and their shrieks are drowned by the curses of their fellow damned at the stench of their putrid flesh. In the next mansion unfaithful wives hang by their breasts, their hands tied to their necks. Undutiful children are tortured in a fire by fiends with red-hot forks. Lower down, shackled in collars of fire, are those who failed to keep their word. Murderers are being knifed by demons in endless expiation of their crime. Lastly, in the fourteenth and lowest mansion of the first storey, are being crucified on burning pillars those who

⁹ On these traditions, see now Colby 2008.

failed to keep the rule of prayer; as the flames devour them, their flesh is seen gradually to peel off their bones.¹⁰

The description of the various categories of sinners and the punishments inflicted on them is reminiscent of what one reads in such texts as the Christian *Apocalypse of Peter* and the Zoroastrian *Ardā Virāz*, but also of the Buddhist accounts of hell. Some of the categories of sinners, such as the “shameless women” who show their hair to outsiders and persons who neglect their ritual duties, are characteristically Muslim and allude to elements of Islamic Law. It is, however, perhaps even more significant that the majority of the transgressions listed are not specifically Islamic but rather seem to inscribe themselves into a wider tradition about punishments in hell. Nevertheless, evidence of direct dependence on earlier sources is hard to establish.¹¹ In the other direction, the question of an influence of the *miʿrāj* traditions on Dante’s *Inferno* (famously argued by Asín Palacios 1968, 1984) remains contested.¹² Interesting as these questions are, they will not be further pursued here. Instead, I shall, for the remainder of this article, discuss some of the more theoretical questions regarding hell debated by Muslim theologians, questions which nevertheless have grave practical implications and which represent a distinctively Islamic contribution to the theme.

Who goes to Hell, and is Hell Eternal?

While the various descriptions of hell in Islamic literature, especially as found in the *miʿrāj* traditions, manifest a tendency to heighten the force

¹⁰ For the Arabic text summarized here, and a Spanish translation of it, see Asín Palacios 1984:432–37. Asín’s source is a Leiden ms. (Leiden University Library Or. 786, no. 7) containing a copy of the anonymous *Khabar al-Miʿrāj* attributed to Ibn ‘Abbas. Graphic illustrations of the various punishments are found in the famous miniatures of Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale Suppl. turc 190; see Séguin 1977. See also Smith and Haddad 1981:86–87.

¹¹ See the tentative remarks by Schrieke 1916:17–18; Horovitz 1919:173–74. Further research in this direction seems not to have been undertaken.

¹² See Asín Palacios 1984: 469–609 “Historia y crítica de una polémica”; and the bibliography, specifically with reference to the Late Medieval *Liber Scale Machometi*, in Colby 2008:283–84 n.37.

of the threat of hell, by expanding the number of the categories of sinners and elaborating the gruesome details of their sufferings, in other contexts a contrary tendency is evident, viz. an interest in reducing the reality of the threat. Thus it may be insisted that Allah in his mercy is both able and likely to forgive sins and to give sinners a better lot in the hereafter than what they deserve on the basis of their own merits. Moreover, the value of repentance has been often stressed, though the question of whether God's mercy is dependent on such external factors has been a problem with some theologians. Finally, the possibility of intercession has been an important issue in this context, especially the power of the Prophet himself to intercede on behalf of the members of his community.¹³

Associated with these questions is also the matter of defining what constitutes grave sins, as different from small, and more easily forgivable, sins. There is no fixed canon of mortal sins in Islamic theology. It may be said that the only sin that all theologians have regarded as definitely unpardonable and assuredly leading to hell, is disbelief, either in the form of *kufṛ*, the stubborn refusal to believe, or *shirk*, the worship of something other than the one God — in other words idolatry (Smith and Haddad 1981:22). Although there exists a prophetic tradition listing seven deadly sins — idolatry, magic, murder, robbing orphans, usury, apostasy, and the slandering of faithful women (ibid. 23) — the tendency has been to suggest that even grave sinners may hope for God's mercy, as long as they have professed belief and are Muslims (ibid. 81–82).

The overriding category for unpardonable sin is, however, undoubtedly *kufṛ*, disbelief, and because of that, the idea could be formed that committing a grave sin in itself constituted evidence of *kufṛ*. That is, a murderer (i.e. someone who had killed another Muslim) or a usurer had by this very, ungodly act ceased to be a Muslim. Some of the most famous theological debates in early Islam revolved around these questions: the Khawārij claimed that all grave sinners were *kāfirūn* and would be eternally damned in hell (in addition to deserving capital punishment as apostates in this world), whereas the opposite party, the

¹³) On these issues, see e.g. Smith and Haddad 1981:24–27, 81–82, 141–43; Gardet 1967:305–14.

Murji'a, thought that the grave sinners must still be considered believers and could therefore hope eventually to enter the Garden by God's mercy. As is well known, out of this debate arose the so-called Middle Position, al-Mu'tazila, whose proponents, in order to solve the dilemma, introduced an intermediary category between the believer and the disbeliever: the *fāsiq*, the "depraved Muslim." This type of person would go to hell, the Mu'tazila argued, at least if he had not made a sincere repentance, but his punishment would be milder than that inflicted on the downright non-Muslim, the *kāfir*. Ultimately, however, the prevailing view of the classical Islamic theology of the Ash'arite school came to be that, on the one hand, God was free to judge as he chooses ("We do certainly know best those who deserve most to be burned therein" Q. 19:70),¹⁴ but, on the other hand, all believers might rest assured of salvation, since God himself had explicitly promised that he would forgive all sins other than *shirk* (4:48.110) and said that anyone who had done an atom's weight of good would be recompensed (99:7–8).¹⁵

This reassuring proposition nevertheless did not quite resolve the issue once and for all. The idea that going to hell is a real possibility even for Muslims has continued to play an important role throughout the history of Islam. Judgment on the last day is a prospect that all humans must face, the Qur'an says (19:71). Muslim preaching has always emphasized that humans are responsible for their acts and that life in this world must be led in awareness of its consequences for the hereafter. It is important not just to be a Muslim but also to be a good Muslim. In practice, the more or less implicit assumption is generally made that the bad Muslim risks going to hell. Thus, the threat of hell has served an evident function, and still does, in admonitory and edificational discourses, where the continuity between this world and the next is a frequent theme.¹⁶

¹⁴ The Ash'arites were concerned with affirming the omnipotence of God even to the extent that, "it seemed theoretically (*'aqlān*) possible to some dogmatists that the Faithful should dwell in Hell for ever on account of their sins, and that the infidels should dwell in Paradise for ever on account of divine forgiveness" (Wensinck 1932:184).

¹⁵ Cf. e.g. Smith and Haddad 1981:21–25, 81; Gardet 1967:292–314. For more detailed accounts of the positions of the various schools and individual theologians see van Ess 1991–97, 4:1059: index, s.vv. "Hölle," "Höllenstrafe."

¹⁶ For a survey of more modern Muslim views on hell, see Smith and Haddad 134–43.

A certain amount of tension therefore exists between the idea that hell is essentially a place of retribution for the disbelievers, the non-Muslims, and the idea that it is an instrument for the punishing of sin. As was shown above, this tension exists in the Qur'an as well, and it arises from the co-existence of two distinct functions of the idea of hell: that it serves, on the one hand, to separate Muslims and non-Muslims and that it works, on the other hand, to ensure the moral and religious discipline of the Muslims themselves.

One way to resolve this tension has been to introduce differentiations within hell. The idea, already mentioned, that hell contains different levels serves this purpose. The highest level, reserved for sinful Muslims, holds somewhat milder punishments than the lower levels where disbelievers of various kinds are tormented. Even more common, however, is the idea that the punishment of Muslims will be only temporary, so that after having been punished for a suitable period of time the bad Muslims will eventually be admitted into the Garden with the rest of the believers. To be sure, the Qur'an several times gives the impression that the torments of the Fire will be eternal (10:52, 32:14, 41:28). Other verses, however, state that the punishment will last as long as God wishes (6:128), or as long as the heavens and the earth endure (11:107), a formulation which has been commonly interpreted to mean that the sinners will not remain in hell for ever. It has been usual to think, for instance, with reference to the seven levels of hell, that the highest level, reserved for Muslims, will be temporary, while the lower levels will exist eternally as places of punishment for the various kinds of disbelievers.¹⁷

The idea that hell may be a temporary experience for certain categories of persons has sometimes been compared to the Christian doctrine of purgatory (Smith and Haddad 1981:93). In some respects this comparison is appropriate. A number of Muslim authors, both classical and modern, have stressed the correctional, purging and healing purpose of such a limited infernal punishment. On the other hand, it is still hell, and not a separate place, like the Catholic Purgatory, and other Muslim sources tend rather to stress that hell in this case is like a limited time

¹⁷ For the debates on the eternality of hell, see e.g. Smith and Haddad 1981:93–95, 142–43; Gwynne 2002:418–19; Robson 1938.

sentence needed for the sinners to pay back what they owe their Lord, and not a school of spiritual improvement.

It should also be mentioned that Islamic eschatology also includes the idea that the soul of each dead person is interrogated and tormented already in the grave immediately after death. The punishment suffered in the grave, in the intermediary period called the *barsakh*, may then be subtracted from the sentence to hell incurred before the throne of judgment on the day of resurrection.¹⁸

To conclude on the subject of hell's eternality, it may be remarked that several types of concerns have worked against the idea of an eternal hell in Islamic thought. The belief in the mercy of God, combined with the optimistic interpretation of the above-mentioned Qur'anic verses, is one of them. Another is the basic difficulty of admitting that Muslims, even if they have committed serious crimes, will end up together with the disbelievers in the hereafter. This seems basically to be a problem of logical classification, since an essential aspect of the distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims is that the former will be rewarded and the latter punished. This difficulty could be resolved, as we have seen, either by redefining the grave Muslim sinner as being no longer a Muslim, or by making his (or her) stay in hell temporary. A third concern has been the reluctance to admit, from the perspective of Islam's strict monotheism, the notion that something other than God himself might have eternal existence — an argument that was made by groups later to be condemned as heretical such as the Jahmiya.

Whatever the arguments advanced, it has become a widespread opinion that even if the Garden with its blissful existence will be eternal, the other place, the Fire, will not exist forever, so that even the worst sinners will be redeemed in the end though God's mercy (Smith and Haddad 1981:142–43). Since the function of hell, however, is not only to punish sinners but also to separate Muslims from non-Muslims, that contention leaves unsolved the question of what will happen to the disbelievers dwelling in hell. Will they, too, be redeemed in the end?

¹⁸) See Smith and Haddad 1981, esp. chapters 2 and 3; Zaki 2001, with bibliography. The period between death and the resurrection is the chief subject matter of the vast body of *qiyāma* books, the “eschatological manuals” that are extensively drawn upon in Smith's and Haddad's book and of which translations into European languages are sometimes marketed under such titles as “The Islamic Book of the Dead.”

After all, the notion that the *kāfir* will suffer eternal punishment in hell has been a well-established dogma (Björkman 1978:407–8). Among those who hold that hell itself will one day cease to exist, however, some have stated that the non-Muslims who inhabit it will also be annihilated at that moment (ibid. 143).¹⁹ Other voices have taken an explicitly universalist position on this issue. Thus, a modernist such as Maulana Muhammad Ali have stated that

there can be but little doubt that Hell is a temporary place for the sinner, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, and this also supports the view that the chastisement of Hell is not for torture, but as a remedy, to heal the spiritual diseases which a man has incurred of himself and by his own negligence, and to enable him to start again on the road to the higher life. (Quoted from Smith and Haddad 1981:143–44)

This remarkably optimistic view, which gives hope of salvation in the end even for non-Muslims, is hardly representative for contemporary Muslim theology in general. However, discussion is still carried on about such matters. There is, for instance the verse that occurs twice in the Qur'an and which says: "Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve" (2:62; cf. 5:69). On the other hand, there exists a strong exegetical tradition that claims that those verses have been abrogated by 3:85: "... whoever desires a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers."²⁰ Nonetheless, the question of the salvation of "the others" continues to be a significant topic in contemporary Muslim discourse. Influential theologians are currently speaking out against the idea of "a monopoly of salvation" in Islam — though not without causing opposition.²¹ The issue is hotly debated among Muslims on the Internet. These debates indicate that

¹⁹ Smith and Haddad (1981:230 n.49) only refer to the al-Azhar *shaykh* Maḥmud Shaltūt (1893–1963) for this opinion. It would be interesting to have more documentation on this position. For older examples, see van Ess 1991–97, 4:554.

²⁰ On this topic, see now Acar 2008, esp. 299–304.

²¹ See Heck 2004, presenting the Syrian theologian Muḥammad al-Ḥabash. For related discussions, see Acar 2008, and the interesting dissertation by M. H. Khalil 2007.

whereas the notions of salvation and perdition, and of eschatological rewards and punishments, play an important role in the construction and maintenance of religious identity, they also become increasingly challenged in the context of a global society recognizing common humanitarian values. For some, the conviction that the disbelievers will end up in hell becomes a matter of preserving religious identity; for others, it has become clear that religious identity must these days be affirmed by other means than by imagining the “others” as destined for hell.

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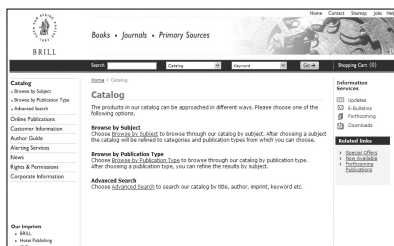
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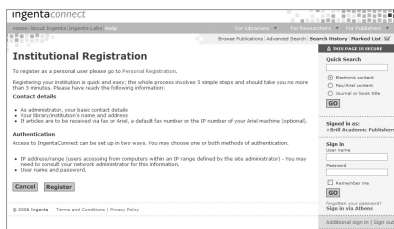
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Sacred Voice, Profane Sight: The Senses, Cosmology, and Epistemology in Early Islamic History

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Abstract

From the time of the Qur'anic revelation (ca. 609–632 CE) up to the mid 11th century a problematic methodology of knowledge transmission dominated the discursive practices of early Muslim scholars. The methodology capitalized almost exclusively on *isnad* and narration for the transmission of the prophetic tradition despite widespread literacy in the urban centers of the Islamic world. The methodology was puzzling even for those scholars who practiced it as they offered different speculations about its origins. Finding their accounts wanting I proceed to propose an account for this methodology in terms of interpretive schemas that consist of three models: senso-somatic, cosmological, and epistemological. I show that the first model is composed of two sub-models: a dominant audiocentric model and a recessive ocularcentric model. I also show that the cosmological model is composed of two sub-models: the world of absence and the world of presence. The epistemological model is a propositional model parasitic on the first two models. The proposed analysis explicates these models to demonstrate two points: (1) the intra-model hierarchical structure and inter-models congruence and (2) the motivational force of these models in the persistence of the problematic methodology for more than three centuries despite extensive literacy.

Keywords

interpretive schemas, knowledge transmission, the senses and cosmology, Islamic epistemology, cultural motivation

Introduction

In this paper I offer, as an attempt to explicate a problematic methodology of knowledge transmission, an analysis of cultural models peculiar

to a specific cultural collectivity and characteristic of a definite historical moment: the Muslim scholars of early Islamic history. Central among these cultural models is what I will call the Arabic senso-somatic cultural model. As I endeavor to show, this model represents cultural knowledge about the senses and their relations to certain body organs. Moreover, I argue that this model is a dual system consisting of two sub-models articulated together with an articulator that belongs to the two sub-models simultaneously. The model involves construing the senses into hierarchical structures and linking them to body organs that are imbued with differential meanings and values. The two sub-models will be called the audiocentric sensotype and the ocularcentric sensotype. The senso-somatic model, I further argue, is itself articulated with other models, namely, cosmological and epistemological models, both of which evince a hierarchy remarkable in its congruence with the senso-somatic model. Ultimately, the analysis is intended to demonstrate the motivational force of these cultural models in the reproduction of certain discursive practices.

I begin by discussing the recent literatures, in Islamic scholarship on the problem of auditory method in early Islamic history and cognitive anthropology, on both of which I draw for construing the argument of this paper. Second, I look into the problematic methodology of knowledge production and transmission that relied almost exclusively on “auditing” and narrating the religious texts, and which dominated the discursive practices of early Muslim scholars approximately from the beginning of the 7th century up to mid 11th century. I will show that no convincing argument has been offered to account for this problematic methodology. Subsequently, I recover, describe, and analyze the three cultural models I have just mentioned, which provide the mediating interpretive schemas by which that problematic methodology is motivated and in reference to which it becomes intelligible.

Theoretical Approach, Historical Scholarship, and Texts

In the analysis advanced in this paper I draw on three categories of sources: (1) theory and ethnographies produced within the discipline of cognitive anthropology; (2) Islamic scholarship on the problem of oral/aural transmission of knowledge and literature in early Islamic history;

and (3) religious texts produced during the earliest time of Islamic history, primarily Qur'anic and secondarily prophetic texts. Within the discipline of cognitive anthropology I follow Bradd Shore in understanding the ideational side of culture as “an extensive and heterogeneous collection of models” (Shore 1996:44). However, contrary to Shore, I stress Hutchins' thesis of distributed cognitive processes that rejects the distinction between individual mental processes and cultural mental contents in favor of only one level of adaptive cognitive processes that “accumulates partial solutions to frequently encountered problems” (Hutchins 1995:354). Adaptive cognitive processes consist of mental, linguistic, and behavioral activities that involve a flow of knowledge representations carried in linguistic mediums or in external artifacts, activities in which individual humans may be merely components in a complex cognitive system (Hutchins 1995; cf. Langacker 1987:154–165; 2008:28–30). The difference between Shore and Hutchins is that for the latter cognition and behavior must not be conceived of as two contrasting levels or stages but as an extended continuation of each other, each of which makes a part of a larger system. The concept of cognition for Hutchins can be read as a system with two extensions, ideational and real, with dialectical relationships that provide the precondition for change. Hutchins' thesis is consistent with Bateson's cybernetic understanding of mind as a learning and self-organized adaptive system regardless of whether it is anchored in agency or possesses intentionality or not (Bateson 1972, 1979).

This is particularly true of the problematic methodology in question since a complete, but minimal, process that typified it would involve at least four elements: a first narrator or group of narrators; a second narrator or a group of narrators, a text, and finally an act called *attahamul wal ada'* which literally meant “carrying and delivering,” that is, carrying a text received from a narrator(s) and delivering the text to another narrator(s). *Attahamul wal ada'* was a complex cognitive act that might extend over months of travel across hundreds of miles and hence overlap with acts unrelated to it as well as acts that might instantiate a subschema or parts of a higher schema of which *attahamul wal ada'* was only a subschema. Furthermore, in the process of *attahamul wal ada'* there was an informational flow of feed and feedback, control and change, adaptation and reorganization between the extensional part of the cognitive system in question and its intentional part, the part that I

will call, following D'Andrade, the interpretive schemas. Without such a flow of information adaptive change of distributed cognitive systems cannot be imagined. The adaptive change of this cognitive system will be touched on later in this paper.

I also follow cognitive anthropologists, especially D'Andrade (1989a, 1989b), Holland and Quinn (1987) and Strauss and Quinn (1997), in that cultural models or interpretive schemas are neither accessible nor inaccessible but largely lie between these two extremes (D'Andrade 1992:114) and can be explicated only via rigorous methods of analysis. I follow Lakoff (1987) and Langacker (1987, 1990, 2008), among other cognitive linguists, in that meaning is possible only in terms of concepts' relations to other concepts articulated in cultural-cognitive schemas that are, according to Wierzbicka (1992, 1997), a combination of universal and culture-specific elements. Most crucial for the argument of this paper is D'Andrade's thesis that cultural schemas possess motivational force, hence to understand why people act in certain ways "one needs to know their goals, and to understand their goals one must understand their overall interpretive system... and to understand their interpretive system — their schemas — one must understand something about the hierarchical relations among these schemas" (D'Andrade 1992:31; Strauss 1992a, 1992b).

The second category of sources consists of a corpus of modern Islamic scholarship that has been characterized by a movement from the certainty of the 19th and early 20th centuries' scholars that knowledge in early Islam was primarily, if not solely, transmitted orally to a diminishing of such certainty in the later part of the 20th century (Schoeler 2006). Some of the most influential orientalists, particularly the mid-19th century scholar Alois Sprenger and the late 19th/early 20th century pioneer of Islamic studies Ignaz Goldziher, were advocates of a primarily oral transmission of knowledge, although both agreed that *hadith*, i.e., the prophetic tradition, was committed to writing from the very beginning albeit only for private reference (Cook 1997:440; Schoeler 2004:68, 2006:28). In the second part of the 20th century, however, the certainty about a predominantly oral culture of early Islam began to give way to doubt due primarily to the works of Abbott (Abbott 1957–1972) and Sezgin (1971). Abbott, for example, advocated an early and incremental written tradition based on evidence such

as Umayyad papyri fragments while Sezgin proposed a method for the reconstruction of these early written fragments from the later compilations (Schoeler 2006:28). Schoeler, however, cited several studies that tested and ultimately cast doubt on Abbott's and Sezgin's claims. Subsequently, Schoeler reconsidered the problem as teaching practices of the Islamic sciences. Summing up his argument Schoeler wrote:

The sources of the compilations in questions... are for the most part *lectures* held by... teachers on the basis of written notes — read out or recited from memory — which were listened to and put back into writing by students. Thus, these notes are mostly not written works in the sense of books given their finished shape and edited by their author; on the other hand, they are in the majority of cases not purely oral traditions in the sense that the [teacher] and his audience kept the material under instruction exclusively in their memory... *Arabic scholars held the view that a student should have "heard" the material being taught: ar-riwayah al-masmu'ah, the "heard" or "audited" transmission... was regarded by the Muslims as the best method of transmission.* (Schoeler 2006:45; emphasis added)

Thus, Schoeler's argument, which I will follow throughout, avers that knowledge transmission in early Islam was not as much oral as auditory; in other words, it was not speech-centered but audiocentric as will be clear in the body of this paper. It is Schoeler's theory that I adapt here and from which I assume the following points throughout this paper:

1. Writing existed alongside narration and *isnad*, a fact which makes *isnad* and the narration method all the more problematic as I shall show below.
2. Written documents in the first 150 years of the history of Islam were analogous to lecture notes and aides-memoires rather than books for transmitting knowledge.
3. *Isnad* and narration were of highly privileged value in the scientific culture of early Islam which warrants calling this culture audiocentric.

In addition to these three points I also assume following Michael Cook (Cook 1997) that writing of *hadith* was resisted and disparaged in early Islam but contrary to him I take that as a sign of some cultural logic

operative behind the whole methodology. The disparagement of writing was not due to Jewish influence as Josef Horowitz (2004 [1918]) and Cook (1997) claim but rather to commonality of cultural knowledge and contingent solutions to shared practical problems (Schoeler 2004).

I want to illustrate this idea of commonality by a linguistic example that questions the argument from influence. The Hebrew paradigm of pronouns is almost identical to the Arabic, yet it is simple-minded to claim that that was due to borrowing the Hebrew paradigm. More reasonable is to point to the sharedness of linguistic origins. Similarly, disparagement of writing was due to common cultural origins, genealogies, and unison rather than to influence or borrowing. The combination of these points renders the methodology all the more problematic, and on this problematic nature I shall expand in the following two sections.

Finally, I draw on primary texts produced in the earliest phase of the time under consideration. These texts are drawn exclusively from the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition for two significant reasons: first, they are the earliest texts in Islam and second, they are the most authentic and hence reflexive of the Arabic culture at the time of the Qur'anic revelation.

A Problematic Methodology

Approximately from the beginning of the 7th century up to the middle of the 11th century a distinctive practice concerning the production, circulation, and transmission of knowledge, primarily by oral/aural *isnad*, dominated the discursive practices of Muslim scholars. The *isnad* involved hearing of texts, i.e., the *hadith*, from a teacher by a student of that teacher. This act of hearing was continuously repeated across the generations, a process that ultimately resulted in having a long chain of narrators preceding each text and testifying to the crucial importance of hearing and narrating texts as the most culturally privileged method of knowledge transmission.

Medieval Muslim scholars customarily classified knowledge into three main categories. First, there is what they called the sciences of *shari'ah* (Islamic disciplines). Second, there is Greek philosophy that they called ancient knowledge or, alternatively, the intellectual sciences

(*al-‘ulum al-‘aqliyyah*). And third, there are the sciences of Arabic language (*al-‘ulum al-lisaniyyah*), by which they mean literature, linguistics, literary criticism, rhetoric, and so forth (Ibn Khaldun 1960; Al-Andalusi 1985; cf. Zaydan 1957). Knowledge of the first category, especially the *hadith*,¹ as opposed to that of the second, was acquired, circulated, and transmitted only through continuous cycles of hearing, memorizing, and narrating the sacred texts. Little attention, if any, was paid to the contents of the texts themselves and hence the authenticity of a text was determined by examining the credibility of the chain of narrators. The generally accepted norm was that no scholar could attain respectful status unless he became part of the chain of narrators himself. This methodology continued to dominate the Islamic knowledge practices for more than three centuries, disparaging writing as a medium of knowledge production, circulation and transmission. The following text narrated by Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi (d. 1070 CE), one of the prominent scholars of *hadith* who lived in the 11th century, long after the extensive spread of literacy in the Islamic world, illustrates this methodology:

Abu Said Muhammad... told us [Al-Baghdadi, the narrator] that Abu Al-Abbaas Muhammad... Al-Asamm was told by Muhammad... Al-Saghani who was told by Abu Al-Fath Muhammad Ibn Ahmad... and Abu Bakr Muhammad... Al-Saiyyad who were told by Ahmad... Al-Nasibi who was told by Al-Harth... Al-Tamimi... who were told by ‘Affan who was told by Humam who was told by Zaid Ibn Aslam who was told by ‘Atta’ Ibn Yasaar who was told by ‘Abu Said Al-Khuduri that the Prophet, peace be upon Him said “*do not write down from [my discourse] except the Qur’an... and whoever wrote something other than the Qur’an must erase it.*” (Al-Baghdadi 1975:29)

The sequence of names are the names of the narrators excluding the last narrator, Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi, the writer of *Taqyid Al-‘ilm* (literally, The Writing of Knowledge), the book from which I quote the above text. This chain of narrators was called *sanad* or *isnad* both of which literally mean “support (of the text),” and was accorded a great significance, even more significance than that accorded the prophetic text

¹ *Hadith* is the technical term used to refer to texts narrated about what the prophet Muhammad had said, done, and sanctioned. These texts have also been called the *sun-nah* (= tradition) of the Prophet and from which the name of the largest Islamic division, namely, the Sunnis, is derived.

itself. The dots that punctuate the names of the narrators indicate the elimination of extended genealogies of the narrators. Finally, the prophetic text is in italics. This form of the prophetic tradition is not peculiar to the above quoted text but characteristic of all prophetic traditions that can be found in scores of books and compilations.

The quoted text was written down in the eleventh century by a scholar who lived in Baghdad, the centre of Islamic civilization where learning was in its zenith at that particular juncture of history. In other words, Baghdad at the time was where literacy was to be found, yet this prophetic text was transmitted by nearly thirteenth generations of narrators and for more than three hundred years. The first narrator, Abu Said Al-Khuduri (d. 683 CE), was a companion of the Prophet Muhammad (Al-Asqalani 1973:4/167; Ibn Abdalbar n.d.:4/1672),² while the last narrator, Al-Baghdadi, lived and died in Baghdad in 1070 CE (Al-Thahabi 1983:18/286). Hence, this text had been transmitted verbally for approximately 380 years, that is, for thirteen generations, more or less. The text was also narrated and written down by Imam Muslim, who died in 875 CE (Al-Thahabi 1983:12/580), in his famous compilation of the prophetic tradition (Al-Qushayri n.d.:9/339–340).³ Al-Baghdadi, however, did not quote Muslim but narrated the prophetic text himself and thus traced the “genealogy” of the text along partially different chain of narrators. Thus, Al-Khuduri narrated the prophetic text before 632 CE and the text was narrated and written down by Muslim before 875 CE and subsequently it was transmitted by a number of narrators until about the year 1070 when Al-Baghdadi narrated and wrote down the text in his book. This example typifies the method of knowledge transmission in early Islamic history. In the next section I discuss three kinds of discursive practices that coevolved, as auxiliary disciplines, with this methodology of knowledge transmission.

²) Medieval historical sources mentioned four dates for the date of the death of Al-Khuduri: 683, 684, 693, and 685 CE (Ibn Hajar 1973 4:167; Ibn Abdalbar n.d. 4:1672).

³) Muslim's *isnad* is the following: Haddab Al-Azdi — Hammam — Zaid Ibn Aslam — 'Ata' Ibn Siyar — Abu Said Al-Khuduri.

Auxiliary Disciplines

Since Muslim scholars considered transmission of knowledge via *isnad* and narration as the only credible way for preserving and authenticating prophetic texts, three discursive practices coalesced around this culturally privileged methodology. First, there developed a discipline called *mustalah al-hadith*, literally the science of the support; second, a discipline called *‘ilm arrijal* or the narrators’ biographical histories augmented *mustalah al-hadith*; and finally, a privileged practice of travel for “carrying and delivering” (*attahamul wal ada’*) the prophetic traditions became the normative practice. The first discipline concerned itself with the classification of “the support” into numerous categories that were subsequently arranged along a scale of credibility, according to which the support (not the text) was judged as either *sahih* (sound), *hasan* (fine), *dha‘if* (weak), or *mawdu‘* (fabricated). Moreover, each of these categories was subcategorized as either continuous or discontinuous, multiple or singular, and direct or indirect, and each of these subcategories was further divided into multiple subcategories (Ibn Al-Salah 2005, Ibn Kathir 1967; Al-Suyuti 1966). It is important to note that “the science of the support” was not concerned with the text, for the latter was almost completely ignored as the prophetic texts were not to be interpreted, critiqued or reasoned about but to be memorized and followed.

And again since the authenticity of the prophetic texts depended almost solely on the credibility of the narrators detailed biographies of the narrators called *‘ilm arrijal* (the science of men/narrators) were narrated, memorized and then narrated again and when they were compiled they filled scores of volumes that exceeded in number those of the prophetic tradition (e.g., Al-Asqalani 1973). It was on the basis of these biographies that the narrators were evaluated according to two fundamental attributes: cognitive soundness and religious piety. Finally, there was the normative practice called *arrihlah fi-talab al-‘ilm*, which literally means “travel for seeking knowledge.” Thus, a knowledge seeker (*talib ‘ilm*) living in central Asia, for example, would travel to Baghdad, or Kufah,⁴ or Damascus, or Al-Madina to “carry and deliver” a text typically no longer than a few lines. Similarly, a knowledge seeker living

⁴ Kufah is a town located in the southern Iraq near the river Euphrates.

in Spain would travel to Egypt, Syria, or Hijaz⁵ to “carry” a one-paragraph text.

It is most striking that knowledge seekers traversed hundreds of miles in caravans to listen to and memorize a few texts at a time when writing was widespread and well established in the urban centers. It is most striking too that scholars compiled hundreds of biographical histories about the narrators, biographies that were themselves narrated by other narrators about whom additional biographical histories were also compiled as a means for authenticating those biographies. It is most striking too that scholars dedicated tremendous energy examining “the supports” in light of the massive biographies rather than examining the texts themselves. No one would fail to ask: Why did knowledge-seekers and other Muslim scholars memorize “the supports” of the prophetic traditions and thousands of biographies and then exert excruciating efforts to study those biographies and the chains of narrators in a time when writing was widespread in the urban centers? Why did scholars rely on *isnad* and narration as the authoritative method of knowledge transmission and hence had to traverse long distances to “carry and deliver” knowledge according to this methodology? Would it not be more efficient, rational, pragmatic, and reliable to write down the prophetic texts early on and study those texts directly? I should emphasize that the problem I want to raise is not whether writing was unknown in early Islamic history. As discussed above, recent studies have confirmed the existence of writing from the very beginning of Islam. The problem is why audiocentric transmission of knowledge existed *besides* writing as the culturally privileged methodology and why writing was disparaged (Horovitz 2004 [1918]; Cook 1997). I want to argue that the alternative suggested in the last question above was an “impossible probability,” or less decisively, “improbable possibility.” My answer seems counter-intuitive yet highly plausible as I endeavor to demonstrate in this paper. To render this answer intelligible one needs to explicate the mediating interpretive schemas that constrained as well as motivated that methodology.

⁵⁾ Hijaz is the north western part of the Arabian Peninsula that extends from Mecca to the north of Al-Madina.

Before doing so, however, I should like to briefly discuss some arguments proposed by Muslim scholars of medieval time to account for the predominance of this apparently peculiar methodology of knowledge production. The mere fact that they tried to account for this methodology indicates that they themselves found their discursive practices puzzling. In discussing these arguments I want to show that none of them really adequately accounts for the methodology in question. Historical sources documented four arguments which I will call: the naturalist, the pragmatic, the religious, and the culturalist. According to the naturalist argument, *hadith* narratives were transmitted verbally because verbal transmission was more reliable than writing especially since in early Islamic history writing, being handwritten, was liable to errors and falsification. The pragmatic argument claims that verbal transmission forestalled mixing the Qur'an with the Prophetic tradition. As to the religious argument, writing was prohibited for religious reasons, although those reasons were not specified but were subject to speculation. Finally, the culturalist argument holds that the Arabs at the time of revelation were illiterate people having a strong oral culture and tradition (Al-Baghdadi 1975; see also Schoeler 2004:77–78).

Under closer scrutiny the naturalist and the religious arguments turn out to be untenable, since neither of them can explain why the Qur'an, which is unanimously considered theologically superior to and historically more credible than the *hadith*, was written, at least partly, during the life of the Prophet and compiled shortly after his death. Nor does it explain why non-religious texts, particularly poetry, were not compiled until after three centuries of oral transmission (Dayf 1960:140–141). These historical facts also invalidate the pragmatic argument, for the writing and compilation of the Qur'an already forestalled mixing *hadith* with the Qur'an. The culturalist argument does not fare much better, since it is either tautological or incognizant of the historical fact that writing was well known in Mecca and Al-Madina before and after Muhammad. Furthermore, the continuous transmission of *hadith* via *isnad* and narration that took place for at least three centuries even in the urban literate centers of the Islamic world, weakens the argument.

Nevertheless, I believe that there is a kernel of truth to the religious argument: not that there are explicit Qur'anic commandments against writing, but rather because of some cultural ideals attested via the

Qur'an's few pejorative allusions to writing. Writing is mentioned or alluded to in the Qur'an either in reference to religious texts or secular contracts and agreements. The Qur'an commands the believers to write their secular contracts and agreements as the following verses illustrate:

O ye who believe! When ye deal with each other, in transactions involving future obligations in a fixed period of time, reduce them to writing. Let a scribe write down faithfully as between the parties: let not the scribe refuse to write: as Allah Has taught him, so let him write... Disdain not to reduce to writing (your contract) for a future period, whether it be small or big: it is juster in the sight of Allah, more suitable as evidence, and more convenient to prevent doubts among yourselves but if it be a transaction which ye carry out on the spot among yourselves, there is no blame on you if ye reduce it not to writing... (2:282)⁶

Let those who find not the wherewithal for marriage keep themselves chaste, until Allah gives them means out of His grace. And if any of your slaves ask for a deed in writing (to enable them to earn their freedom for a certain sum), give them such a deed if ye know any good in them... (24:33)

However, there is not even a single verse that commands or recommends the writing of religious texts, the Qur'an or otherwise. In fact, references to writing religious texts are always pejorative. The following verses are illustrative:

Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say: "This is from Allah," to traffic with it for miserable price! — Woe to them for what their hands do write, and for the gain they make thereby. (2:79)

Say: "Who then sent down the Book which Moses brought? — a light and guidance to man: *But ye make it into (separate) sheets for show, while ye conceal much (of its contents):* therein were ye taught that which ye knew not- neither ye nor your fathers." Say: "(Allah) (sent it down)": Then leave them to plunge in vain discourse and trifling. (6:91)

And they say: "Tales of the ancients, which he has *caused to be written*" and they are dictated before him morning and evening." (25:5)

⁶ All cited Qur'anic verses are from the English translation by Yusuf Abdullah Ali. As is customary, the first number indicates the sura (chapter), and the second indicates the verse number. Emphasis has been added where appropriate to highlight key passages.

Yet, the Qur'an was written partially during the life of Muhammad and compiled shortly after his death. I must add, however, that the writing and compilation of the Qur'an was according to Muslim sources due to sheer historical contingency that nonetheless encountered strong resistance. It was suggested by the second Caliph, 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, well-known for his pragmatism, to the first Caliph, Abu Bakr, who repeatedly rejected the suggestion. But due to relentless pressure from 'Umar, Abu Bakr gave up and formed a committee for that task (see for example Al-Tabari 1960; Al-Mas'udi 1965). Thus, we have finally come to encounter a confusion of historical data and no convincing account for the problematic methodology. Religious and non-religious texts were likewise transmitted via *isnad* for centuries, despite widespread literacy, and sometimes along with writing; the believers were commanded to write down secular agreements but not religious texts; and finally the Qur'an was compiled only by dint of the advice of one pragmatic man and his advice was initially vigorously rejected, resisted but finally yielded to. Reducing this confusion of historical facts to an intelligible account should start, I believe, from D'Andrade's thesis that "to understand why people act in certain ways one needs to know their goals, and to understand their goals one must understand their *overall interpretive system*... and to understand their interpretive system — their schemas — one must understand something about *the hierarchical relations among these schemas*" (D'Andrade 1992:31, emphasis added). In the remaining part of this paper I will explicate the interpretive schemas of early Muslims and specify their hierarchical structures. I will begin by a cultural-semantic analysis of the word *'ilm* since this is this word that came to refer to the subject matter of the problematic methodology. Next I will discuss the classification of knowledge in pre-Islamic time and in early Islamic history. This is a necessary step for defining the place of the prophetic tradition, the *hadith*, in the overall classificatory scheme of knowledge in early Islamic history.

A Semantic Analysis of *'ilm*, *'adab*, and *hadith*

The principal aim of this section is to move from Arabic linguistic forms to Arabic cultural concepts. The linguistic forms are: *'ilm*, *'adab*, and *hadith*. I will attempt to show that *'adab* and *hadith* are two instances

of the general concept of *‘ilm*; the former had been the old route (*sun-nah*) to survival during *jahiliyyah* (literally, the age of ignorance) while the latter has been the path (*sunnah*) to salvation for the majority of Muslims since the death of the Prophet. This attempt requires specifying the semantic structural isomorphism manifest in both *‘adab* and *hadith*, which follows for both from being instances of the general concept of *‘ilm*.

The word *‘ilm*, a noun that is now considered a rough equivalent to the English words “science” and “knowledge,” referred in early Arabic history to something entirely different. As is the case with almost all Arabic words, *‘ilm* is derived from a tri-consonantal root, ‘-l-m, which gives rise to many derived stems, among which is the verb *‘alama*, which means “to mark” or “to put a sign on something,” so that it stands out against indistinct ground. From the same root comes another noun *‘alam*, which conveys different but related senses, and has to do with perceptual salience, prominence, or distinctness. Thus, *‘alam* may refer to “flag,” “mountain,” “signpost,” “lighthouse,” and so forth. The same word can be extended metaphorically to mean “prominent figures,” i.e., people who enjoy high status whether by virtue of their knowledge, authority, honor or the like (Ibn Manzur 1956–1966:417–422, Al-Fairusabadi 1997:301–302). A second category of words with related meanings, albeit semantically different from the ones discussed so far, are also derived from the same tri-consonantal root. Thus, the verb *‘alima* is a verb that means to “come to learn or to know.” In addition there are two other verbs, *‘a‘lama* and *‘allama*, both of which are transitive verbs. The first means “to report or inform (someone),” while the second means “to teach and to educate.” Finally, *‘ilm*, a cognate of the lexical forms mentioned above, came to mean “knowledge” and in the present time, “science,” whether natural science or otherwise. Thus far, I have identified the following two central senses of two different, but closely related, sets of lexical forms, both of which are derived from the same tri-consonantal root ‘-l-m.

- The first sense, conveyed by the verb *‘alama* and the noun *‘alam*, has to do with a physical figure or sign that is made, by nature or humans, perceptually distinct from its surrounding ground, and which is used, for the most part, to guide bodily movement.

- The second, conveyed by the verbs *'alima*, *'a'lama*, *'allama*, and the noun *'ilm*, has to do with a psychological trace made, by nature or humans, memorably distinct from the surrounding oblivion, and which is used to guide the inner psychological experience.

Following proposals by cognitive semanticists (e.g., Lakoff 1987; Langacker 1990), I argue that these two senses evince some corresponding structural invariants that define the meanings of each group of words as well as describe two isomorphic experiences, albeit, one is physical while the other is psychological. Here are the minimal structural equivalences between the two senses:

- **Figure:** Salient Physical form = Memorable Psychological Trace
- **Ground:** Indistinct Surrounding = Indistinct Psychological Surrounding (Oblivion)
- **Function:** Guidance of Body = Guidance of Personhood
- **Dimension:** Spatial = Temporal

Thus, the word *'ilm* came to denote “a mark or trace inscribed on memory to overcome time and forgetting, and ultimately to provide moral guidance.” Immediately before the emergence of Islam the word *'ilm* assumed a technical sense to refer to the history of the ancestors. This history consisted of narratives about war, peace, love, courage, cowardice, fidelity, treachery, honor, dishonor, feats, and defeats. For the most part, however, this history was preserved in poetry but also in narratives of different genres such as stories, fables, proverbs, legends, histories, genealogies, and oratory, in short, in all of what Arab literary critics call *'adab*, an Arabic word equivalent to the English word “literature.”

According to Nallino the word *'adab* was synonymous to the Arabic word *sunnaḥ*, or tradition, a word used technically to refer to the prophetic texts (Nallino 1955[1911]:26). In Arabic it is not uncommon for the order of the three consonants in a root to alter in the derived stem to give rise to a new meaning with close affinity to the meanings of the stems that are derived from the same root but which exhibit normal order of the basic consonants. For Nallino the word *'adab* is such a stem. The basic consonant order of this word is d-'-b but after permutation it becomes ' -d-b. All the stems that are derived from the root d-'-b

have the general sense of repetition and perseverance. Thus the word *da'aba* means to keep doing certain act repetitively and perseveringly to such an extent that that act becomes a habit, routine, custom and tradition. There is always a negative sense about this word, either morally and/or physically, for doing a task repeatedly exhausts the body and dulls the mind. The act becomes mindless and arduous. But once the order of consonants is altered the new stem *'adab* assumes a positive sense added to the general sense of repetition and perseverance. Thus, *'addaba* means to educate someone in the tradition of one's society and *'adab* is just that tradition. Nallino concluded that *'adab* was nothing but the custom of the ancestors and since this custom was circulated and transmitted via oral literature this literature, argued Nallino, was tradition or *sunnah*, that is, the ways of the ancestors.

After the emergence of Islam the word *'ilm* acquired a new technical meaning to refer to the prophetic tradition, the speeches, actions, moral character, and even the bodily features of the Prophet. In the classificatory scheme of the Islamic disciplines *'ilm* was designated by another more common term, namely, *hadith* (Baghdadi 1974). *Hadith* is a word derived from the tri-consonantal root h-d-th, which is related to the word *hadath* which refers to a new (and unfamiliar) event. *Haddatha* is a transitive verb related to *hadith* and refers to reporting new (and unfamiliar) events. Thus, *hadith* came to refer in the classificatory scheme of the Islamic disciplines to the discourses and actions of the prophet as well as discourses about the prophet's discourse and actions. *Hadith*, therefore, is about inscribing unfamiliar and new traces in the familiar, as its antithesis, in order to guide personhood in temporal existence.⁷ It is possible now to specify in the concepts of *'adab* and *hadith* the same structural invariants implicit in the concept *'ilm*, as shown below:

'adab

Figure: Salient old customs (*ma'ruf*)

Ground: Surrounding anomalies (*munkar*)

hadith

Salient new customs (*ma'ruf*)

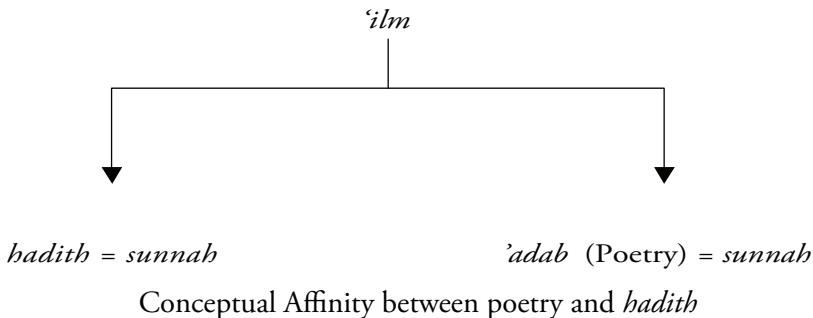
Surrounding old customs (*munkar*)

⁷ In fact, *hadith* is also called *'athar*, a word that literally means “trace,” and *sunnah*, which means “route” or “path” (Al-Suyuti 1966). It is not difficult to discern a connection between these two words for a path is that part of space on which one can recognize foot-traces. “*Sunnah*” was used metaphorically to mean manner, tradition, and custom, just as the English word “way” has been used to refer to manner.

Function: Guidance of personhood
Dimension: Temporal

Guidance of personhood
 Temporal

It is significant to note that *'adab* referred to “old tradition,” while *hadith* refers to “new tradition,” yet both of them are, according to Nalino, *sunnah*. The former was the science of the ancient ancestors while the latter was the science of the new Muslims. *Hadith* and *'adab* are, in a sense, antithetical to each other for the figure in the latter is the ground in the former. After the emergence of Islam *hadith* competed with *'adab* on the question of which one of them was entitled to be called *'ilm* and for social, cultural, and religious reasons *hadith* won the competition as it assumed a religiously sanctioned authority. The following diagram represents the conceptual affinity between *'adab* (i.e., poetry) and *hadith*:



A Classification of Knowledge

Coextensively with the time of the flourishing of the problematic methodology there existed, among the Arabs of early Islamic history, certain classificatory schemata for all knowledge, the explication of which is a prerequisite for an adequate analysis of the senso-somatic model in question. I will provide a list of the various discursive and practical arts known to the Arabs about the time of the Qur'anic revelation, and then try to find an organizing principle that turns the list into an intelligible classificatory scheme. In his history of Arabic literature Zaydan (1957) provided a list of the various categories of knowledge known to the

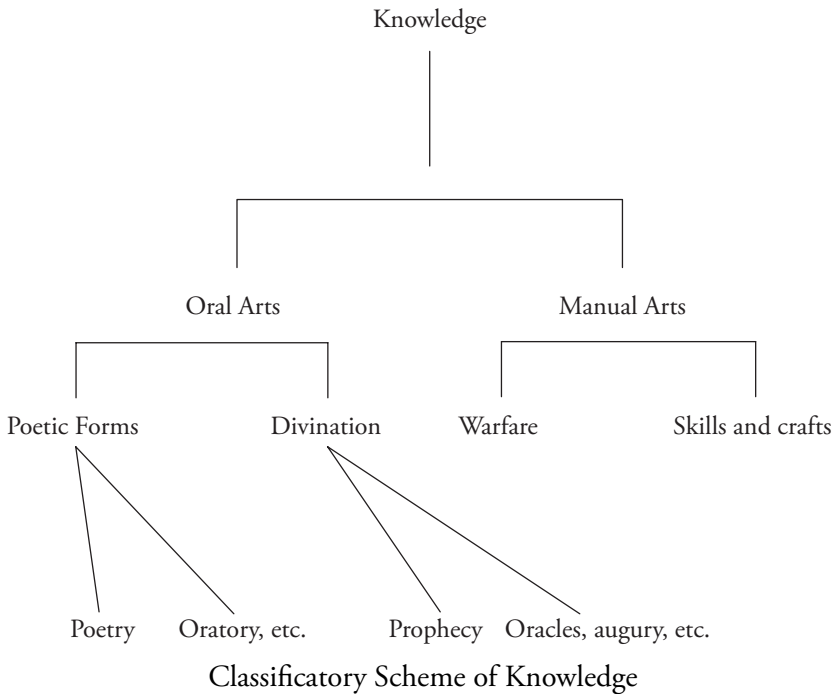
Arabs, especially the Arabs of the regions of Hijaz and Najd.⁸ The list consists of the following: poetry, oratory, proverbs, interpretation of dreams, mythology, genealogy, history, augury, oracle, astronomy, metrology, veterinary science, and knowledge of animal husbandry. This list can be augmented by adding the practical arts that were subsumed by Ibn Khaldun (Ibn Khaldun 1960) under the first book of his *Muqaddimah*, which is about the various kinds of knowledge, including those in Zaydan's list. Thus, an inclusive list of all cultural forms of knowledge understood in the broadest sense of the term will also comprise practical arts such as warfare skills, trade, handicrafts, medicine, and agriculture.

Zaydan made a distinction between borrowed and indigenous arts arranged into four categories that mimic Western counterparts. Thus, in addition to the indigenous Arabic forms of knowledge he classified the rest into natural sciences, mathematical sciences and metaphysical sciences. Henceforth he was compelled to find a slot for each type of knowledge under one of these titles. For example, he subsumed mythology under the mathematical sciences, while *qiyafah*, the art of reconstructing immediate past events from foot-traces, is placed under metaphysics. Obviously Zaydan's scheme of classification hardly reflects the cultural classification of knowledge known to the Arabs of early Islam. Besides, borrowed discourses and technologies are almost always indigenized and in the process of indigenization borrowed elements assume, as *bricolage*, new cultural significance, henceforth the distinction between borrowed and indigenous misses the cultural logic behind indigenization.

I want to argue that the artificial Western categories must be discarded and the indigenous/borrowed opposition substituted with a different organizing principle that will render all kinds of knowledge mentioned above into a culturally intelligible classification. The validity of this organizing principle will be justified in terms of its explicatory force and its congruence with the interpretive schemas analyzed in this paper. This classificatory principle is one of opposition between "saying" and "doing," and thus the list provided above can be reduced into two kinds of knowledge: oral arts and manual arts. The latter were

⁸⁾ *Najd* is the central region of the Arabian Peninsula.

geared toward pragmatic utility and hence included knowledge of warfare skills, medicine, agriculture, animal husbandry, trade, and various kinds of handicrafts. The former included multifarious forms of knowledge such as poetry, legends, oratory, proverbs, divinations and the like, which concerned understandings of the self, the other, history, life, death, and the meaning of human experience. Two main subcategories can be recognized within the latter knowledge: poetic forms and divination (cf. Al-Andalusi 1985:118; Alusi 1923:269). By poetic forms I refer to the amalgam of all the multifarious genres of expression, which are concerned with the understanding of human experience in this world. By divination I refer to all those cultural practices that sought knowledge from the other world in order to see into the future and thus guide human actions accordingly. The following diagram represents the classificatory scheme of Arabic forms of knowledge at the time of the Qur'anic revelation:



This diagram does not merely represent different categories of knowledge but constitutes a hierarchical structure of knowledge. The manual arts were not equal, but varied along a scale of value, in which the highest arts are those concerned with warfare, animal husbandry, and trade.

When a man proved himself an excellent horseman versed in warfare techniques and skills the tribe celebrated this event with great pride. Animal husbandry, agriculture and trade came second as sources of wealth, pride, and emotional attachment. Trade was another respected profession, especially in the commercial centers such as Mecca, and was practiced by the powerful and honorable tribesmen and women. Lower than warfare skills and trade came agriculture for it compelled people to choose settlement, landed property and a peaceful mode of life. The lowest of all practices were the handicrafts, especially that of the blacksmith, which were regarded as unworthy of honorable tribesmen. Almost always only slaves and *mawali*⁹ practiced handicrafts in the non-subsistence economy of Meccan society. In the oral arts poetic forms were superior to divination and poetry was superior to oratory and other poetic forms. Similarly, prophecy was superior to oracle. At the time of the Qur'anic revelation the structural slot of prophecy was vacant and only oracles and auguries and similar oral practices existed at the time. This cultural map made poetry superior to all the existing forms of oral arts. This was manifest in the fascination of the Arabs with the poetic language and the scorn they had for the language of diviners. Moreover, the recurrent themes of poetry were about the best of all manual arts, those pertaining to wars, honors, heroism and the feats of the ancestors (Alusi 1923, Zaydan 1957).

The status of the poet in the tribal societies of early Arabia was accordingly elevated above that of all other tribesmen, as an equal of the warrior horseman or the patriarch of the tribe. When a man first proved himself a poet of remarkable stature the tribe would consider the event a source of pride and honor, and thus ceremoniously celebrated the event in public feasts. For the poet would become the mouthpiece of the tribe, the one who promulgated his tribe's worth and honorable

⁹) *Mawali* is the plural form of *mawla*, a term that refers to people of lower social, economic, and ethnic status. Due to their lower status they were considered weak and vulnerable and had to attach themselves to a strong tribe in order to become members, albeit inferior members, of the more powerful group.

deeds; the one who would defend his tribe's reputation with eulogies and dishonor his tribe's enemies with satires. Poetry was considered one of the essential components of the tribe's experience, one that the tribe endeavored to accumulate over the generations by educating its members in its own art of poetry. Each tribe's poet would assume the role of a tutor for his tribe's members and especially for his own son, who as his disciple would most often assume first the role of the rhapsodist, and only after this course of education was completed became a poet of independent voice.

This was most likely due to the belief that poetry was inspired by supernatural beings, *jinn*. As I will show in the next section *jinn* were considered to have a capacity for knowledge and an ability for deeds far beyond the capacity and ability of any human beings. Poetic practices therefore involved four elements: a poet, his *jinn*, a rhapsodist, and the oral transmission of poetry. These four elements will be reproduced in early Islamic history under a camouflage of new words: the Prophet, the archangel, the narrator, and the oral transmission of the *hadith*. Yet, this reproduction signified a crucial transformation. First, the contrast and incongruity between "saying" and "doing," a contrast in which "saying" was the act of poets whereas "doing" was the act of worldly tribesmen, was replaced by a complementarity and congruity between "listening" and "obeying," i.e., listening to the divine revelation and obeying its commands. Obviously, listening here is not to the many evil *jinn* but to Muhammad, the only source of Truth, who in turn listened to the one and only Truth, whose source was God himself but through the mediation of the Archangel. To understand this transformation I will have to address three cultural interpretive schemas: the senso-somatic, ethno-cosmological, and ethno-epistemological.

The Arabic Senso-Somatic Model

The senso-somatic model I analyze in this section is a system of concepts articulated together to form two subsystems: a dominant audio-centric sensotype and a recessive ocularcentric sensotype. The audiocentric sensotype privileges hearing over all other senses, particularly the sense of sight, as the sensory channel to a higher kind of knowledge. In fact, the sense of hearing established itself in opposition to the

sense of sight, which was considered a sensory channel to a lower kind of knowledge, and from this opposition it derived its higher value. Hearing was connected, according to the Arabic senso-somatic model, to the heart. The heart was considered the most vital of all body organs as the seat of the noblest faculties, knowledge, morals, righteousness, and faith, but also the origin of the basest opposites of all these, for the heart may suffer moral ailment. This understanding is typified by the following texts from the Qur'an:

(Such) as dispute about the Signs of Allah, without any authority that hath reached them, grievous and odious (is such conduct) in the sight of Allah and of the Believers. Thus doth Allah, seal up every heart — of arrogant and obstinate Transgressors. (40:35)

And behold! The Hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a disease (even) say: “(Allah) and His Messenger promised us nothing but delusion!” (33:12)

Of them there are some who (pretend to) listen to thee; but *We have thrown veils on their hearts, So they understand it not, and deafness in their ears*; if they saw every one of the signs, not they will believe in them... (6:25)

To those who inherit the earth in succession to its (previous) possessors, is it not a guiding, (lesson) that, if We so willed, We could punish them (too) for their sins, and *seal up their hearts so that they could not hear?* (7:100)

And *We put coverings over their hearts lest they should understand the Qur'an, and deafness into their ears*: when thou dost commemorate thy Lord and Him alone in the Qur'an, they turn on their backs, fleeing (from the Truth). (17:46)

And who doth more wrong than one who is reminded of the Signs of his Lord, but turns away from them, forgetting the (deeds) which his hands have sent forth? Verily *We have set veils over their hearts lest they should understand this, and over their ears, deafness*, if thou callest them to guidance, even then will they never accept guidance. (18:57)

Do they not travel through the land, *so that their hearts may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear?* Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, *but their hearts which are in their breasts*. (22:46)

They say: “*Our hearts are under veils, (concealed) from that to which thou dost invite us, and in our ears in a deafness*, and between us and thee is a screen: so do thou (what thou wilt); for us, we shall do (what we will!).” (41:5)

These are but a few verses out of numerous that reveal the cultural understandings of the heart and the ear. It is worthwhile to note the connection between the ear and the heart in most of the quoted verses

and the emphatic assertion in (22:46) that it is not the eye that is the path to faith but rather the heart. In addition to these verses one finds equally numerous prophetic traditions resonating with the Qur'anic verses quoted above. Consider the following prophetic text:

Truly in the body there is a morsel of flesh which, if it be whole, all the body is whole and which, if it be diseased, all of it is diseased. Truly it is the heart. (Al-Bukhari 1997:2/49)¹⁰

Yet, originally the heart is, as it were, a sensor for Truth, inherently good and sound. Here is a prophetic tradition that expresses this understanding:

Consult your heart. Righteousness is that about which the soul feels tranquil and the heart feels tranquil, and wrongdoing is that which wavers in the soul and moves to and from in the breast even though people again and again have given you their legal opinion [in its favor]. (An-Nawawi 1977:27/90–91)

The heart must, however, have a channel to the world of absence. I will elaborate on the world of absence in the next section, which is dedicated to the ethno-cosmology of early Arabic/Islamic history. The ear is the window of the heart onto the world of Truth as much as the heart is the receptor of Truth. It is through the ear that the heart receives the message of the world of absence. Henceforth, belief begins by hearing, which is the sense that connects the heart to Truth. Many Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions attest to this cultural belief. Here are a few verses that convey this cultural conception:

Among them are some *who (pretend to) listen to thee: But canst thou make the deaf to hear*, — even though they are without understanding? (10:42)

So verily thou canst not make the dead to hear, nor canst thou make the deaf to hear the call, when they show their backs and turn away. (30:52)

Nor are alike those that are living and those that are dead. *Allah can make any that He wills to hear; but thou canst not make those to hear who are (buried) in graves.* (35:22)

¹⁰⁾ Quotations of the prophetic texts are all from the English translation of Sahih Al-Bukhari by Muhsin Khan. The numbers separated by slashes are the book and the number of the Hadith, respectively.

If Allah had found in them any good. *He would indeed have made them listen: (As it is), if He had made them listen, they would but have turned back and declined (Faith).* (8:23)

Here, as in many other verses, we find enunciations that connect the ear to the heart and emphasize the critical function of hearing in receiving the divine message, the message that comes from the world of absence. But since the world of absence is hierarchically structured, as I will show in the next section, the ear and the heart can receive messages from the evil and dangerous part of the world of absence, the world of Satan, jinn, and demons. The ear and the heart are also connected to the tongue to make the audiocentric subsystem which dominates the senso-somatic model in question.

It is crucial to note that this most noble knowledge had nothing to do with the head or the brain. The head was not the author of knowledge but the master of cunning and shrewdness which were connected to the eye and associated with the world of presence. Thus in Arabic of the early Islamic period the word for cunning was *ra'y*, which literally means “seen or seeing”, but its understood figurative meaning was “opinion.” This is highly significant, for “opinion” is that belief which could be true or false; one that is as yet un-validated and uncertain. This leads to considering the ocularcentric subsystem, in which the eye and the head occupied positions structurally isomorphic with that of the ear and the heart respectively. Just as the ear was directly connected to the heart the eye was directly connected to the head but also to the tongue as the articulator of the two subsystems in the senso-somatic model. In contrast to the ear the eye was considered most fallible and unreliable, and in Islam the receptor of temptation and the target of sorcery. Here are a few verses conveying these cultural understandings:

I found her and her people worshipping the sun besides Allah. Satan has made their deeds seem pleasing in their eyes, and has kept them away from the Path, — so they receive no guidance. (27:24)

And remember when ye met, He showed them to you as few in your eyes, and He made you appear as contemptible in their eyes: that Allah might accomplish a matter already enacted. For to Allah do all questions go back (for decision). (8:44)

Said Moses: “Throw ye (first).” So when they threw, they *bewitched the eyes of the people*, and struck terror into them: for they showed a great (feat of) magic. (7:116)

When trouble toucheth a man, He crieth unto Us (in all postures) — lying down on his side, or sitting, or standing. But when We have solved his trouble, he passeth on his way as if he had never cried to Us for a trouble that touched him! thus do the deeds of transgressors seem fair in their eyes! (10:12)

And keep thy soul content with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His Face; and let not thine eyes pass beyond them, seeking the pomp and glitter of this Life; nor obey any whose heart We have permitted to neglect the remembrance of Us, one who follows his own desires, whose case has gone beyond all bounds. (18:28)

In addition to such Qur'anic expressions of the fallibility of eyesight there are three other verses highly significant in their disparagement of the eye as a means of knowing the world of absence, the higher world, in comparison with the world of presence, this world:

He Who created the seven heavens one above another: No want of proportion wilt thou see in the Creation of (Allah) Most Gracious. So turn thy vision again: seest thou any flaw? Again turn thy vision a second time: (thy) vision will come back to thee dull and discomfited, in a state worn out. And we have, (from of old), adorned the lowest heaven with Lamps, and We have made such (Lamps) (as) missiles to drive away the Evil Ones, and have prepared for them the Penalty of the Blazing Fire. (67:3–5)

These verses provide a narrative in which the eye and the ear are implicitly contrasted against a cosmic picture furnishing a background for the narrative. High in the seventh heaven there is that noble part of the world of absence, the world of *al-mala'u-l-a'la* — a concept which will be discussed in detail in the next section. That world is guarded by the stars against the act of eavesdropping continuously attempted by the jinn, the evil ones, to steal the divine knowledge and then communicate them to people through the medium of poetry, a form of cultural knowledge that I will discuss shortly. But as to the eyesight it can only read the signs of the perfect beauty of God's creation after the acceptance of God's message. It is only through hearing that the divine secrets of the world of absence can be accessed, but that world is guarded by stars, and hence knowledge of the world of absence can be received only via God's grace when He sends down on the heart of Muhammad, via the medium of the archangel, His message to be heard, memorized, and obeyed.

The early Arabs of Mecca accused Muhammad of merely "seeing" things and hence being a false prophet. Alternatively, he was accused of

writing the Qur'an, or to have it written, from ancient books of fables and myths. Most Muslims believe that Muhammad was illiterate and consider this attribute as evidence of his true prophethood, for he had, according to Muslims, a direct connection with the divine through hearing, not through written books, which are inseparable from the sense of sight. The Qur'an defended the prophet in ways that betray this cultural understanding of writing and consequently reading as inferior to authentic revelation. Consider these Qur'anic verses:

And they say: "Tales of the ancients, which he has caused to be written: and they are dictated before him morning and evening." (15:25)

And thou wast not (able) to recite a Book before this (Book came), nor art thou (able) to transcribe it with thy right hand: In that case, indeed, would the talkers of vanities have doubted. (29:48)

It is not difficult to associate writing with seeing and doing while reciting can be connected with hearing and saying. Nor is it difficult to find in the Qur'an verses that privilege reciting, hearing and saying. The word *qara'a*, which now means "(he) read," had an entirely different meaning in the time of the Qur'anic revelation. The chronologically first verses of the Qur'an run thus:

Read! in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created — Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood. *Read!* And thy Lord is Most Bountiful. (96:1–3)

The word *iqra'* rendered as "read!" in the translation meant "proclaim" or "recite" and not the familiar act of reading from a book. That is hardly surprising, for there is in the historical sources no statement about or allusion to a book or the like from which Muhammad was commanded to read. Even in the present time in Bedouin tribes and among exorcists the word *yaqra'* (he reads) means to recite in order to educate the young or exorcise the jinn, or sometimes to become an ascetic as in the word *taqarra'a*, another form related to the word *yaqra'*. The latter and its inflected forms had nothing to do with books, writing, alphabets, and orthography. In early Islam reading belonged to saying, hearing, the ear and the heart, that is, to the superior form of knowledge while writing belonged to doing, seeing, the eye and the

head; in short to the inferior form of knowledge. The cultural disparaging of the eye finds an expression in the prohibition of pictorial as well as sculptural representations of living beings in Islam. The eye is also considered the channel to carnal temptations, hence the veil of women in Islam.

Muhammad was also accused of being *majnun* (possessed) a state of the mind in which one is “spoken to by the jinn,” and the Arabs believed that all poets were inspired by and spoken to by the jinn (Ni’mah 1961:149–170). The following texts from the Qur’an confirm this cultural belief:

And say: “What! shall we give up our gods for the sake of a Poet possessed?” (37:36)

Yet they turn away from him and say: “Tutored (by jinn), a man possessed!” (44:14)

They say: “O thou to whom the Message is being revealed! truly thou art mad (or possessed!)” (15:6)

Similarly, no apostle came to the Peoples before them, but they said (of him) in like manner, “A sorcerer, or one possessed!” (51:52)

(And some said): “He is only a man possessed: wait (and have patience) with him for a time.” (23:25)

From these verses we have evidence that during the early days of Islam the polytheists of Mecca accused Muhammad of two culturally significant accusations: reading from written sources and thereby denying the divine origin of the Qur’an, or alternatively of being possessed by jinn that talked and misguided him. Both accusations refer to lower kinds of knowledge, namely, knowledge acquired from the evil part of the world of absence, that is, from the jinn, or from the world of presence through writing, seeing, and the fallible reasoning — or better perhaps the deceptive cunning — of the head. I will address the two worlds just mentioned in the next section. I conclude this section by a brief discussion of the cultural concept of the head. The word “*ra’s*,” which means “head,” or any metonymic substitute of that word, occurs in Qur’anic and prophetic texts either in the context of punishment on the Day of Judgment or in reference to the head as source of vanity, deception, and disobedience, hence bowing down and touching the ground with the

head as part of ritual worship in Islam. Here are some texts conveying this understanding:

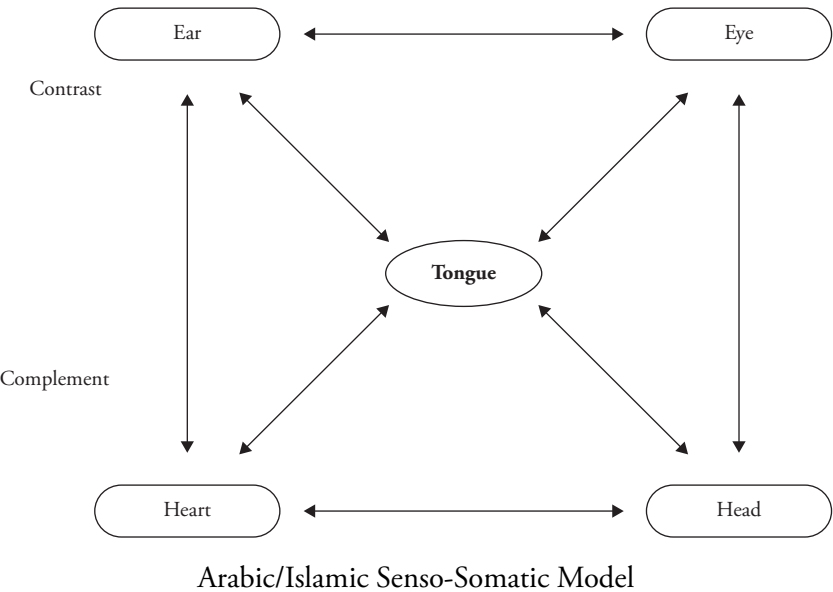
These two antagonists dispute with each other about their Lord: But those who deny (their Lord), — for them will be cut out a garment of Fire: over their heads will be poured out boiling water. (22:19)

Let him beware! If he desist not, We will drag him by *the forelock*, — *A lying, sinful forelock!* Then, let him call (for help) to his council (of comrades): We will call on the angels of punishment (to deal with him)! Nay, heed him not: But bow down in adoration, and bring thyself the closer (to Allah!). (96:15–19)

And be steadfast in prayer; practice regular charity; and *bow down your heads with those who bow down* (in worship). (2:43)

And when it is said to them, “Come, the Messenger of Allah will pray for your forgiveness,” *they turn aside their heads, and thou wouldst see them turning away their faces in arrogance.* (63:5)

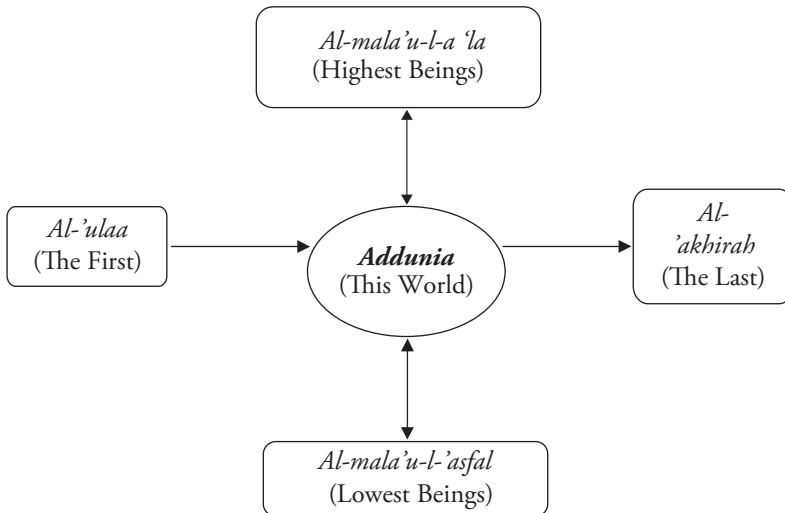
The analysis undertaken thus far can be represented in the following diagram:



The relations that connect the ear to the heart and the eye to the head are complementary, while the relations obtaining between the head and the heart, and the ear and the eye are contrastive. The tongue articulates the two subsystems by being a component of both, and is consequently imbued with almost supernatural potency and creativity. I will discuss the cultural understandings of the tongue and *addunia* in the penultimate section.

The Arabic Cosmological Model

The analysis proposed above leads to considering the connection between the senso-somatic model and the prevalent ethno-cosmology of early Arabic culture. During and after the time of revelation this ethno-cosmology was structurally symmetric, but not so morally. Being, or the universe, in this cosmology, has two constitutive dimensions, space and time, and is populated by a myriad of beings. Space and time can be schematically represented along two axes: a vertical spatial axis and a horizontal temporal axis as shown in the diagram below:



Arabic/Islamic Cosmological Model

Along the vertical axis space is hierarchized; the highest is *al-mala'u-l-a'la*, which literally means the highest beings. It is here where Allah, angels, and martyrs, and paradise are. This is the glorious world of the seventh heaven as the following verses attest.

(So) they (jinn) should not strain their ears in the direction of the Exalted Assembly (*al-mala'u-l-a'la*) but be cast away from every side, Repulsed, for they are under a perpetual penalty. (37:8–9)

No knowledge have I of the Chiefs on high (*al-mala'u-l-a'la*), when they discuss (matters) among themselves. Only this has been revealed to me: that I am to give warning plainly and publicly. (38:69–70)

Below the seventh heaven come six heavens that are differentially valued according to their proximity to *al-mala'u-l-a'la*. Similarly, in this space there exist many different kinds of angels who are responsible for carrying out God's commands. The following Qur'anic verses attest to such an understanding:

And thou wilt see the angels surrounding the Throne (Divine) on all sides, singing Glory and Praise to their Lord. The Decision between them (at Judgment) will be in (perfect) justice, and the cry (on all sides) will be, "Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!" (39:75)

The Day the heaven shall be rent asunder with clouds, and angels shall be sent down, descending (in ranks). (25:25)

In the case of those who say, "Our Lord is Allah," and, further, stand straight and steadfast, the angels descend on them (from time to time): "Fear ye not!" (they suggest), "Nor grieve! but receive the Glad Tidings of the Garden (of Bliss), the which ye were promised!" (41:30)

Addunia, a word that has no exact English equivalent, occupied the middle space between *al-mala'u-l-a'la* and *al-mala'u-l-'asfal*,¹¹ the latter being "the lowest beings." In *addunia* there exist human beings and animals and all natural beings, but it is also a space frequented by jinn and angels, the former to trouble human beings and the latter to carry

¹¹ This term does not appear in the Qur'an or the prophetic texts verbatim. There are occurrences of the words *'asfal* and *safilin* in the context of describing the lowest level of hell which, as some texts indicate, is in the lowest earth (Heinen 1982).

out God's commands. Between *addunia* and *al-mala'ul-'asfal* there are the six earths where the lowest beings exist. This is the proper place of the jinn, Satan, and Satan's genitors and demons. It is important to note that although *addunia* is in the first earth it is not equivalent to the earth, for *addunia* is a combination of space and time, that is, a spatio-temporal point; it is "the here and now", hence *addunia* is called '*alamu-shahadah*, which literally means "the world of presence" or alternatively "the seen world." The word *shahadah* can be defined as "beholding" or "seeing" or "witnessing," but the word also means "presence" or "presencing." Thus, "presence" and "seeing" turn out to be two inseparable modes of experience, experience of "the here and now," that is, in *addunia*. *Addunia* means, among other things, the near and the low, and this attests to its nature as a spatiotemporal point. It is lower than "the highest beings" and nearer than *al-'ulaa* and *al-'akhirah*.

The last two terms move us to considering the temporal dimension of being. *Al-'ulaa* means "the first" and refers to the beginning of time, and in particular the beginning of human life, the time when God created and expelled Adam and Eve from *al-jannah* (paradise), the highest spatiotemporal existence, that which is shared by God's highest angels. *Al-'ulaa*, therefore, is the remotest past or the past of all pasts. At the opposite extreme end of the axis of time there is *al-'akhirah*, which literally means "the last," the day of resurrection and accountability, when human beings are held accountable for what they did and said in *addunia*. It is crucial to note that '*alamu shahadah* (= *addunia*) contrasts with '*alamul ghaib* a phrase that literally means "the world of absence" and "the unseen world." In a sense '*alamu shahadah*, "the seen world," is surrounded by the world of absence, which penetrates, pervades, and subordinates (or must subordinate) the world of presence, '*alamu shahadah*.

The universe, according to this cosmology, is populated by a multitude of beings including human beings and all other living beings, but crucially also by God, the angels, the jinn and myriads of unknown creatures. Obviously, these beings are not equal. The noblest are the highest in the hierarchy of this cosmology and the nobility of beings decreases as they descend down the hierarchy of Being to the basest of all beings; Satan and his progeny of demons and jinn (Al-Jahiz 1969:6/225–231). This is a moral hierarchy of beings that corresponds

to the spatiotemporal hierarchy. Now these beings, God, the angels, and the jinn, communicate with human beings, that is, convey certain knowledge to human beings. What kinds of knowledge are possible? How can humans acquire, transmit and preserve knowledge? Is there a hierarchy of possible knowledge? Here the analysis should move on to consider the epistemology most congruent with this cosmology and the senso-somatic model explicated above.

The Arabic Epistemological Model

It is expected that a cosmological model and a senso-somatic model of such an ontological and moral hierarchy will tend to articulate with a congruent epistemology. If the world of absence was morally and/or ontologically superior to the world of presence, and if the world of presence was morally ambiguous and typically accessed through the faculty of sight, while the world of absence was accessed typically through the faculty of hearing, an epistemology grounded in hearing and speaking would be more probable than other epistemologies that were grounded in other senses. Furthermore, since the world of absence was hierarchically structured knowledge that could be obtained through contact with that world, it had also to reflect that hierarchy. Thus, there were two different kinds of knowledge; that which was acquired through communicating with the world of absence or through seeing the world of presence. Moreover, communicating with the world of absence branched into two different kinds of knowledge: that which was acquired through communicating with jinn (*al-mala'u-lasfal*) and that which was accessed through communicating with God and his angels (*al-mala'u-la'la*). The first knowledge consisted mainly in poetry (*'adab*) while the second consisted in prophecies and divinations.

In the pre-Islamic *jahiliyyah*, poetry was the highest and noblest form of knowledge. It was believed to be inspired by the jinn, hence the Arabs' obsession with poetry, for poetry belonged to the world of absence and was communicated by beings that belonged to that world. The Arabs of early Islamic history believed that every outstanding poet had an inspiring jinni. They even defined the names of the inspiring jinni for each prominent poet. In one poem, for example, a poet by the name of Abu Annajam Al-'Ujali bragged about his inspiring virulent

male jinni only to disparage the weak female jinn of all of his rival poets (Al-Jahiz 1969: 6/229). The Qur'an confirms this belief in a sura called *The Poets*. In this sura we find the following verses:

Shall I inform you, (O people!), on whom it is that the evil ones descend? They descend on every lying, wicked person, (Into whose ears) they pour hearsay vanities, and most of them are liars. And the Poets, — It is those straying in Evil, who follow them: Seest thou not that they wander distracted in every valley? — And that they say what they practice not? (26:221–226)

Poetry, therefore, came through the inspiration of the jinn from the other world, the world of absence, hence its power, potency, fascination, and magic. Yet, the power of poetry did not originate solely from its source, that is, the world of absence, but also because the inspiring jinn (*al-mala'u-l-'asfal*) were believed to eavesdrop and overhear the news of *al-mala'u-l-a'la*, the speech of God and the angels and the ordinances that were made in heavens by God. Here again the Qur'an confirms this cultural belief in a sura called *The Jinn* as well as in other suras. The following are two verses that express such beliefs:

And we (jinn) pried into the secrets of heaven; but we found it filled with stern guards and flaming fires. "We used, indeed, to sit there in (hidden) stations, to (steal) a hearing; but any who listen now will find a flaming fire watching him in ambush." (72:8–9)

Then, the Qur'an appeared to establish itself in opposition to poetry as belonging to the world of absence, but significantly inspired by Allah, the highest of all beings, or rather by his archangel. It filled the vacant slot of prophecy in the classificatory scheme of knowledge discussed above. Ontologically it is akin to poetry but morally it is antithetical to poetry. The Qur'an therefore invested in the Arabic cultural knowledge to assume the highest authority and legitimacy; it was knowledge that descended from the world of absence yet was given form only through the mysterious, powerful, ambivalent, and dangerous medium of the tongue (the Arabic language), a medium that belonged both to this world and the other world.

But the Qur'an was not the only revelation for Muslims. The prophetic tradition was also a divine revelation, which belonged to *'alamu-l-ghaib* (the world of absence) and originated from God, the Supreme

Being in *'alamu-l-ghaib* as well as *'alamu-shahadah*. Consequently it had to be acquired, transmitted, and preserved through the medium of hearing by the ear, memorizing by the heart, and narrating by the tongue. The Arabic epistemology, therefore, was unmistakably audio-centric; it privileged the sense of hearing over all other channels of sensation, memorizing over visual reasoning, and narration and reciting over reading and writing.

It is worthwhile to examine a case of crucial significance in Islam, namely, the act that either redeems the soul or commits it to damnation; this is the pronouncement that “there is no god except Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah”. This pronouncement is called *ashahadatan*, which literally means “the two testimonies.” The word “*ashahadatan*” is the definite, dual form of the word “*shahadah*” and is derived from the tri-consonantal root “sh-h-d,” which gives rise to several words, all of which refer essentially to the act of seeing or beholding. Hence the pronouncement is preceded by the phrase “I behold.” Once a person utters this statement s/he becomes a Muslim and thereby saves his/her soul. At first sight this pronouncement seems to be at loggerheads with the audiocentric sensotype I have proposed since that pronouncement appeals to the act of “beholding” or “seeing,” and yet, I want to argue, this pronouncement is in perfect agreement with my analysis. In fact, it is the strongest argument in favor of its validity. The argument that the pronouncement does conflict with the model in question would have been true if the pronouncer had really seen or witnessed something. But the “seeing” and “beholding” does not really occur in any sense. The pronouncement is in fact a speech act (Searle 1969) of consent and obedience to the prophet’s vocal message, that is articulated by the tongue of and heard from the mouth of Muhammad. Thus, the speech act of consent or testimony, in actuality, subordinates the sense of sight to the sense of hearing. In this pronouncement hearing dominates seeing.

As shown above the ocularcentric model of knowledge connects the eye, the head, and reasoning to *addunia*, that is, to this ambiguous, unclear, and self-contradicting world, the world of temptation, pollution, danger, and trial. According to the ocularcentric model knowledge acquired through the eye and the head is auxiliary to the divine message and hence subservient to its content. To be sure, there are many

instances of the concepts of “sight,” “thinking,” and “reflection” whose absence is lamented and condemned in the Qur’an. However, these instances refer to reading through the eyesight the divine signs scattered throughout the world of presence whose only value is to point to the world of absence, the lasting real world. Yet, the eye and the head are part of the world of presence and can lead to the denial of the divine message. In fact, this possibility is the rule that can be negated only through the divine voice. In other words, seeing and reflecting on the divine signs is impossible without having the divine voice heard first. Thus, the ethno-epistemology of the early Islamic history can be expressed in the following propositional model:

- Knowledge that comes from the world of absence is superior to knowledge acquired from the world of presence.
- Knowledge that comes from the noble beings of the world of absence (God, angels of God) is superior to knowledge that comes from the lower beings of the world of absence (Satan, demons and jinn).
- Knowledge that comes from the lower beings of the world of absence (jinn) is superior to knowledge acquired from the world of presence.
- Knowledge of the world of absence comes through the sense of hearing and is grasped by the heart, while knowledge of the world of presence is acquired by the sense of seeing and is used by the head.

It is worthwhile to conclude this section by referring to an attempt at a strategic reversal of the hierarchical structure of the senso-somatic model, an attempt that perturbed the discursive regime during the 9th, 10th, and the 11th centuries. At the beginning of this period a “rationalist” school, called *al-mu’tazilah*, flourished simultaneously with the wholesale translation of Greek philosophy. Muslim scholars of this school along with the early Muslim philosophers called their epistemology *al-nazar*, a word that literally means “seeing,” in opposition to the epistemology of the *’ahl al-hadith* (traditionalists), which they called *assama’*; a word that literally means “hearing or listening.” “Seeing” was thus considered equivalent to rational reasoning while “hearing” was

equivalent to acceptance of traditional knowledge without reflection or reasoning. With this transformation the head became not the instrument of cunning but the vessel of the power of thinking, while *ra'y* became “opinion” rather than “cunning.” However, this attempted transformation neither decentered the audiocentric view nor was the ocular-centric view banished from the discursive space of Islam. They have coexisted, ever since, sometimes in parallel and sometimes in tension.

The Tongue and *Addunia*

Most concepts are semantically ambiguous. Etymology and metaphorical extension are among the causes of ambiguity and multiplicity of senses. However, if the meaning of a concept is possible only by virtue of its relation to other concepts in cultural-cognitive schemas — as is now firmly established in cognitive linguistics (Lakoff 1987; Wierzbicka 1992, 1997; Langacker 1987, 1990, 2008) — and if a concept can be a member of more than one cultural-cognitive model, it follows that the ambiguity and multiplicity of meaning can be explained by reference to multiple membership in more than one cultural-cognitive model. Being members in more than one cultural model “tongue” and “*addunia*,” therefore, must be ambiguous assuming in consequence contradictory values, especially as they belong to two diametrically opposed models. Some anthropologists have argued that certain states or beings are dangerous, polluted, potent, and powerful because they either don't belong to a category in a clear-cut classificatory scheme or belong to more than one category simultaneously (Turner 1967, 1977; Leach 1967; Douglas 1978). Hence, diametrically opposed senses are expected of “tongue” and “*addunia*.” Consider for example these texts on conceptions of the tongue:

Whoever can guarantee (the chastity of) what is between his two jaw-bones and what is between his two legs (i.e. his tongue and his private parts), I guarantee Paradise for him. (Al-Bukhari 1966:76/481)

There are two expressions which are very easy for the tongue to say, but they are very heavy in the balance and are very dear to The Beneficent (Allah), and they are, “Subhan Allah Al-'Azim” and “Subhan Allah wa bihamdihi.” (Al-Bukhari 1966:75/415)

The pre-Islamic poet Zuhair Ibn Abi Sulma says: “the tongue is one half of man, the other is his heart and the rest is mere flesh and blood” and an Arabic proverb runs: the worth of a man is in his heart and his tongue”. Another proverb says: “man is hidden under his tongue” (Al-Jahiz 1968:1/171). Yet, the Arabs downgraded the excessive and affected exhibition of eloquence. They had a notion of the two excesses: excessive talk and rhetoric, hence the proverb runs: “the doom of man is between his mandibles”. The Prophet is reported to have said “no endowment was worse than eloquence” and “nothing sends people to hell except the harvest of their tongues”(Al-Jahiz 1968:1/194). These texts point to the mysterious, dangerous, and powerful potentials of the tongue, as an organ potent with good and evil simultaneously. The implicit analogy between the tongue and the sexual organ in the first prophetic text is highly charged with telling ambiguity, with vitality and sin, good and evil, life and death, pollution and purity. The tongue can redeem, damn, deceive, guide, and teach. It can express the consent of the heart or the dissent of the head. The heart consents by listening to the voice of the other world while the head dissents by looking at the mirage of this world. The following Qur’anic texts concern the ambivalent nature of *addunia*, this world:

Likewise did We make for every Messenger an enemy, — evil ones among men and jinns, inspiring each other with *flowery discourses by way of deception*. If thy Lord had so planned, they would not have done it: so leave them and their inventions alone. (6:112)

Know ye (all), that the life of this world is but play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting and multiplying, (in rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children. Here is a similitude: How rain and the growth which it brings forth delight (to) the tillers; soon it withers; thou wilt see it grow yellow; then it becomes dry and crumbles away... And what is the life of this world, but goods and chattels of deception? (57:20)

And the following prophetic text is more eloquent as to the ambiguous nature of *addunia*. It is neither heaven nor hell of the world of absence, but morally and ontologically unclear:

Once the Prophet... said, “The things I am afraid of most for your sake... are the pleasures and splendors of the world and its beauties which will be disclosed to

you.” Somebody said, “O Allah’s Apostle! Can the good bring forth evil?” The Prophet remained silent for a while... Then we noticed that he was being inspired divinely. Then the Prophet wiped off his sweat and said, “Where is the questioner?”... Then he said, “Good never brings forth evil... no doubt this wealth is sweet and green. Blessed is the wealth of a Muslim from which he gives to the poor, the orphans and to needy travelers... No doubt, whoever takes it illegally will be like the one who eats but is never satisfied, and his wealth will be a witness against him on the Day of Resurrection.” (Al-Bukhari 1966:24/544)

Conclusion

The analysis proposed here is intended to render a problematic methodology of knowledge production, circulation and transmission intelligible. My aim has been to highlight the differential values ascribed to the various concepts as a result of being articulated in hierarchically structured models. It is by virtue of these differential values and the hierarchical structure that the models explicated above assumed motivational force. I should note that the analysis I have proposed is a reductive approximation of the interpretive schemas that motivated and oriented knowledge production and transmission in early Islamic history. It is reductive in practice, not in theory, for to undertake an analysis of distributed cognitive processes and cultural models entails by necessity the exclusion of many relevant data whether historical, cognitive, or linguistic. Certainly, there are, for example, cultural meanings of the words “eye,” “sight,” “heart,” and “head” that might be considered as counterexamples to the ones I suggested. However, the different meanings that these words might have can be accounted for in terms of cultural models not discussed in this paper and/or pragmatic uses of those words. As cognitive anthropologists have demonstrated, culture is a heterogeneous collection of models that are connected, overlapped, and entangled with each other through concepts having memberships in more than one model simultaneously (Langacker 1987:154–165; Wierzbicka 1992, 1997). Arguably, it is this manifold membership that permits concepts multiplicity and ambiguity of senses.

Finally a note on rules and exceptions is in order. The models I have analyzed in this paper constitute the general rule, the self-consistent mental part of the cognitive system. As mental and ideational constructs, the models are characterized by consistency and symmetry. On

the other hand, the historically contingent solutions to practical problems such as compiling the Qur'an from private writings and compilations was a solution suggested by one person to a problem perceived by the same person. It is an exception to the mental and hence inconsistent with it. The tension between the two manifests itself in the resistance of the mental to the pressure of the practical, such as the resistance of committing sacred texts to writing despite pressing needs. The exceptions do not negate the general but obfuscate it. Many exceptions can be found in the history of the subject in question and all of them are expected to be accounted for by the same reason, a dialectics between the consistency of the mental and the messy reality of the practical. Akin to the question of rules and exceptions is the question of universality. Although I have made no claims to universality, it is probable that cultural-cognitive models similar to the ones analyzed in this paper may have existed among preliterate groups or in early stages of social evolution. It is perhaps more probable that such models may have existed in cultures centered on divinely revealed messages. It remains an empirical question whether cultural constraints such as social networks, kinship systems, authority structures, ecology and modes of production correlate with a higher distribution of such interpretive schemas or not.

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Multiple Morning Stars in Oral Cosmological Traditions

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Abstract

The Seneca tribe of the Iroquois confederation told an astral myth involving the installation of the mortal So-son-do-wah and his lover Gěn-deñ'-wit-hă into the morning sky. While the relation of the latter to the morning star has never been in doubt, the astronomical identity of So-son-do-wah has remained unclear. It is argued that the recognition of *two* morning stars, as familiar also from the Pawnee and the Blackfoot nations, offers a solution to this question. The notion of multiple morning stars also clarifies some supposedly “confused” observations of Jupiter and Venus. And the attribution of a mythical “erratic” prehistory to the morning star finds a counterpart in the mythologies of, for example, the Pawnee and the Greek Phaethon.

Keywords

cosmology, astronomy, morning star, Venus, archaeoastronomy, star lore

Meeting So-son-do-wah

Myths and other traditions worldwide are awash with references to phenomena seen in the sky, but for modern researchers it is often all but impossible to be certain about the exact astronomical identities of the characters and attributes featured in these. From the Seneca tribe, one of the five nations that originally belonged to the Iroquois League in the western part of New York State, comes the story of a legendary hunter called So-son-do-wah, who was elevated into the night sky along with another “new” astral object. So-son-do-wah’s initial foray into the sky follows the widespread North American motif of a hunter’s celestial pursuit of a giant mammal, in this case an elk rather

than the more usual bear.¹ The exhausting chase ends when the hero's avian mount launches him onto a near-fatal free-fall, as recorded by Harriet Converse:

He was a mighty hunter, the So-son-do-wah!... O-je-a-neh-doh, the Sky Elk, more fleet in his own free fields, ever eluded the dumb arrows which sighed from So-son-do-wah's bow, until day feathered the sky with its plumes of red light, when the night bird shook So-son-do-wah from its wings back to the earth. But Dawn, pitying the sky stranger, rescued him as he was falling, and carrying him to her lodge in the east sky, created him her sentinel to guard its door. (Converse 1908:60–61)

Yet “the heart of So-son-do-wah yearned back to the earth” and once when “So-son-do-wah saw a beautiful maiden standing by a low river where she had gone in search of water,” “he gently approached her, but the wary hunters drew him back to the lodge of Dawn” (Converse 1908:61). Madly in love and concealed in the feathers of a succession of different birds, So-son-do-wah continued to pay the girl regular visits throughout the seasons, but had to return to the sky each night in order to keep watch at the lodge of Dawn. Unfortunately, the illicit tryst met a swift conclusion when, in the Autumn, So-son-do-wah called on his lover from inside the heart of a night hawk:

“She is here!” whispered So-son-do-wah from the heart of the hawk as it swooped down and, lifting her to its broad wings, bore her to the skies... When the maiden awoke, Dawn, who was standing by the door of her lodge, reproved So-son-do-wah for remaining so long on the earth, and transformed the maiden into a star. As punishment to So-son-do-wah for deserting his watch of her door, she invoked the aid of her warrior attendants who seized him and bound his arms. On his forehead they placed the new star, and in her hand a flaming torch, and should he attempt to release himself, the torch will consume him. And thus he remains So-son-do-wah, the human hunter, who yet yearns for the star which has never known him. (Converse 1908:62–63)

¹) “In the Northeast, the most widespread celestial image is that of the never-ending bear hunt. The Passamaquoddy, Seneca, Delaware, and Fox all identify the BIG DIPPER as a bear and hunters, but it is the Micmac narrative that describes the hunt most carefully...” (Miller 1997:36; cf. Squier 1848:256; Alexander 1916:26, 278). For an Iroquois example, see Smith 1883:81.

So-son-do-wah as a Morning Star

Judging by the various hints contained in this narrative, it seems sufficiently clear that the tale has an astronomical import, but the identity of the protagonists is harder to establish than one might imagine at first blush. The “lodge in the east sky” owned by the female “Dawn” must represent the morning twilight seen in the east, which is preceded in Autumn by the zodiacal light, a faint, roughly triangular glow of light seen above the horizon, that is caused by the reflection of sunlight from fine particles of meteoric dust in orbit around the sun. While it remains uncertain whether the figure of “Dawn” herself merely personified this luminous region of light or signified a particular celestial object within its confines, So-son-do-wah in his catasterised form is clearly presented as an astral body placed within the boundaries marked out by the morning twilight or the zodiacal light. As his name literally means “Great Night” or “Great Darkness” (Converse 1908:60 n.1, 35 n.1), the sun and other objects seen at daylight are disqualified, leaving only a star, a planet, or transient forms such as comets and meteors as candidates for So-son-do-wah’s astronomical identity.

A note appended to the story, apparently by Converse herself, clarifies that the Star Woman So-son-do-wah loved was the morning star: her name, *Gěn-deñ'-wit-hă*, means “It Brings the Day” and the Iroquois relate “that the Sun lights his council fire by the torch of the Star Woman before he appears above the horizon. This Star Woman of the Iroquois, who precedes the sun in the east sky, is the morning star of the paleface” (Converse 1908:63). But how about So-son-do-wah himself? That neither a constellation nor a particular star can have been intended for him follows from the fact that all stars except Polaris are in constant motion with respect to the eastern “location” of the dawn, completing a circle around the north pole of the sky every 24 hours and an annual cycle that is seen, for instance, in the shifting position of the signs of the zodiac with respect to the horizon at a fixed moment in the day. A stellar identification of So-son-do-wah would, therefore, violate the apparent requirement that this entity, at least during the early hours of the morning, remained within the zone of crepuscular light in the east throughout the year. The most natural interpretation of this trait is that the Seneca people envisioned So-son-do-wah, too, as a planet observed

exclusively during the hours preceding the rising of the sun — as a morning star, in other words.

Multiple Morning Stars

Yet this deduction raises two other questions. Firstly, how can So-son-do-wah and Gën-deñ'-wit-hă both have been morning stars? Does the reputed placement of the latter on So-son-do-wah's forehead as a "new star" carrying "a flaming torch" imply one or two different celestial bodies? And secondly, which planet or planets embody So-son-do-wah and Gën-deñ'-wit-hă as morning stars?

A single insight offers a possible solution to both queries. As Venus is the brightest natural object in the night sky after the moon, mention of the "morning star" or "evening star" in mythical and cosmological traditions of all ages is generally explained in reference to this planet. Insofar as these designations imply no more than that the planet is seen during twilight hours, however, the planets Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn all potentially qualify as "morning stars" and "evening stars." Because the two inner planets, Mercury and Venus, orbit around the sun in circles smaller than that of the earth, they always appear in close proximity to the sun from a terrestrial vantage-point, disappearing with it in the midst of the night; they are, in other words, "full-time" morning and evening stars, although they cannot always be made out against the light of the sun. Thus, while Venus is far brighter than Mercury, the latter nonetheless qualifies as another morning or evening star, that alternately appears together with Venus as a pair of morning stars or evening stars, or in the opposite phase, serving as morning star while Venus is evening star and *vice versa*. The remaining, outer planets can be observed at any time of the night and at any position on the ecliptic band between west and east. Occasionally, any of these planets may appear as a — "part-time" — morning or evening star together with Venus or Mercury. Actual confusion with Venus may occur during the phase of Venus' invisibility or when the light of Venus is drowned out entirely by that of the sun, allowing only Mars or Jupiter to be seen in its stead.

Natural philosophers in the Old World have recognised the possible concurrent observation of two morning stars since Antiquity.² A text

²) If it can be allowed that classical mythographers acknowledged the possibility of

that may have been written anytime between the 4th century BCE and the 1st century CE attributes an exposition of this to the Pythagorean teacher, Timaeus of Locri (5th century BCE), whose works exerted such a great influence on Plato:

Two others have courses equal to that of the sun, the star of Mercury and the star of Hera, which people call the star of Venus and the Lightbringer. For shepherds and all ordinary people are not wise about what concerns sacred astronomy, nor do they understand the evening and morning risings. For the same star is now the evening star, when it follows the sun at such a distance that it is not hidden by the rays of the sun; and now the morning star, when it precedes the sun and, about dawn, rises before it. Therefore, the star of Venus is often the Lightbringer because it has the same course as the sun; but this is not always so. But many of the fixed stars, as well as many of the planets, in fact any heavenly body of a certain size when it comes over the horizon before the sun, announce the coming of the day. (Timaeus, *De Natura Mundi et Animae*, 26–27 [96e–97a; 214]; tr. Tobin 1985:44–45)³

The medieval scholiast, Pseudo-Bede (12th century CE), similarly commented on the occasional joint appearance of Venus and Mercury in the matutinal sky:

These two planets are also sometimes both above the Sun or below it, or both before or after it. Thus we seem to have two Lucifers and in the same way two Hesperus's. For when Mercury precedes <the Sun>, it assumes the name Lucifer. Venus is the natural name; that is, wherever this star is, it is naturally called Venus. When it precedes the Sun in rising it is called Lucifer; when it appears when the

different planets serving as morning and evening stars respectively, they can in some cases be exonerated from misplaced accusations of stupidity. When Nonnus of Panopolis (5th century CE), in a poetic description of cosmic upheaval, tells that the giant Typhon dragged “first Phosphoros, then Hesperos and the crest of Atlas” from the sky (*Dionysiaca*, 1.206, tr. Rouse 1995:18–19), his translator (1995:43 note) too rashly concludes that “Nonnos did not know, or had forgotten, that the two are one and the same.” Considering that at least the planet Mars, too, could be called *vesper*, “evening star” (Isidore, *De Natura Rerum*, 3.2; 23.2.4), Nonnus may well have patterned the scene on an astrological model indicative of the supposed date of the event, in which e.g. the pair of Venus and Mars served as the twilight stars.

³) The phrases “the star of Mercury and the star of Hera... the star of Venus and the Lightbringer” translate *Herma te kai Hēras, tōn Aphroditas kai phōsphōron*, “many of the fixed stars” and “many of the planets” *polloi... tōn aplanēōn* and *polloi... tōn plazomēnōn*.

Sun is setting it is called Hesperus or Vesper, and this is its name according to function. (Pseudo-Bede, *De Mundi Celestis Terrestrisque Constitutione*, 237–240; tr. Burnett 1985:38–39)

At least two indigenous North American societies, too, are known to have acknowledged the complexities concerning the identity of “morning stars.” The Skidi branch of the Pawnee, of Nebraska, renowned for its astronomical expertise, contrasted the female *cu:piritta:ka* or “White Star” in the western part of the sky with the male *u:pirikucu*’ or “Big Star” in the eastern part (Von del Chamberlain 1982:48, 54–57, 232).⁴ The former, typically rendered “Evening Star” in western literature, is universally agreed to represent Venus’ evening aspect, though the Skidi people “knew that the bright star spent part of its time in the morning sky” (Von del Chamberlain 1982:54). The latter, customarily called “Morning Star,” was carefully distinguished from “Second Morning Star,” who was white and “who assisted the Morning Star,” and from “Morning Star’s Little Brother,” who can safely be identified as the planets Jupiter and Mercury respectively (Linton 1922a:6; Fletcher 1903:11).⁵ A much disputed question concerns the exact identity of Big Star himself, who “was said to stand on a hot bed of flint, from which the sun derived its light” (Von del Chamberlain 1982:57). The Pawnee hailed him as the most powerful of all stars, imbued with the force of life. Tahirüssawichi, a Skidi priest, commented on a sacred song announcing the advent of Big Star, as it heralds the sun:

As we sing this stanza the Morning Star comes still nearer and now we see him standing there in the heavens, a strong man shining brighter and brighter. The soft plume in his hair moves with the breath of the new day, and the ray of the sun touches it with color. As he stands there so bright, he is bringing us strength and

⁴ Fletcher (1903:11–12) offered a different etymology of *u:pirikucu*: “The word is made from ho-pi-rit, ‘star’; ko-ri-tu, ‘fire’; and ku-tzu, ‘large, great, mighty’. The name signifies ‘the mighty star of fire.’”

⁵ Von del Chamberlain 1982:90, citing one of George Dorsey’s unpublished notes: “Sometimes the Skidi speak of the second Morning-Star which, however, is relatively of much less importance. It is said to be white and brighter than Mars and is evidently Jupiter. The little brother of the true Morning-Star (Opirikuts) or Mars is said to follow him up in the sky some distance behind him to carry the Morning-Star’s sacred bundle. He never appears until near sunrise and is never seen in the evening. This star is undoubtedly Mercury...”

new life. As we look upon him he grows less bright, he is receding, going back to his dwelling place whence he came. We watch him vanishing, passing out of our sight. (Tahirüssawichi, in Fletcher 1904:129)

An important clue to Big Star's astronomical identity is his markedly red countenance:

The Morning Star is like a man; he is painted red all over; that is the color of life. He is clad in leggings and a robe is wrapped about him. On his head is a soft downy eagle's feather, painted red. This feather represents the soft, light cloud that is high in the heavens, and the red is the touch of a ray of the coming sun. The soft, downy feather is the symbol of breath and life." (Tahirüssawichi, in Fletcher 1904:129)

He is "a great warrior, painted red, carrying a club in his folded arms, and having on his head a downy feather, painted red. This was the red morning star" (Fletcher 1903:11). A second clue is given by determination of the morning star at times when a captive girl personifying White Star was ritually sacrificed to Big Star. A painstaking analysis shows that Mars, Venus, Jupiter and a comet all appear to have served as morning star on occasion of such sacrifices, yet the astronomer, Von del Chamberlain, deduced that the latter three only functioned as acceptable substitutes for Mars:

... the primary sources indicate that at least three objects might have represented the Morning Star, depending upon circumstances and needs. Mars seems the most likely candidate for the main Morning Star for the following reasons: the red color of Mars matches the frequently noted red color associated with Morning Star; the relative motions of the earth and Mars tend to keep Mars in the morning sky for a long period of time; the migration of Mars from the morning to the evening sky, together with conjunctions between Mars and Venus, reasonably explains the mythological idea of the creative partnership between the Morning and Evening Stars, and the idea is confirmed by repetition in nature; and the historic Morning Star ceremonies occurred after Mars migrated from east to west. ... The sacrifice might be completed after Mars had completed the westward migration and when either (1) Mars had returned to the morning sky; (2) brilliant Venus appeared in the morning sky; or (3), lacking Mars or Venus, Jupiter was present in the morning sky. (Von del Chamberlain 1982:89; cf. 60, 63, 85, 232)⁶

⁶ This discussion supersedes Alexander's (1916:93) casual intimation, also evinced by

A distinction between two morning stars — albeit different ones — was also made by the Blackfoot people, of southern Alberta and northern Montana, who regarded “Morning Star,” “Early Riser” or “Day Star,” names for Venus, as the father of “Young Morning Star” alias “Mistake Morning Star,” who is identified as Jupiter (McClintock 1992:523). The former was envisioned as “tall and straight and his hair was long and shining. His beautiful clothes were of soft-tanned skins, and from them came a fragrance of pine and sweet grass” (McClintock 1992:493). The latter was allegedly “born in the home of the Sun” as Star Boy, but was bullied because of the “mysterious scar” on his face, which earned him his sobriquet *Poïa* or “Scarface” (McClintock 1992:496–497). “When *Poïa* became a young man, he loved a maiden of his own tribe. She was very beautiful and the daughter of a leading chief,” but “she would not accept him as her lover, until he would remove the scar from his face.” On the advice of “an old medicine woman,” who told “that only the Sun himself could remove it,” *Poïa* journeyed to the home of the Sun God, where, “On the intercession of Morning Star, the Sun God consented to remove the scar” (McClintock 1992:497–498). Following an episode in which *Poïa* briefly returned to the earth to teach the people the secrets of the Sun Dance and other rituals, “the Sun God took him back to the sky with the girl he loved.” A miraculous transformation ensued:

When *Poïa* returned to the home of the Sun, the Sun God made him bright and beautiful, just like his father, Morning Star. In those days Morning Star and his son could be seen together in the east. Because *Poïa* appears first in the sky, the Blackfeet often mistake him for his father, and he is therefore sometimes called *Poks-o-piks-o-aks*, Mistake Morning Star. (McClintock 1992:499)

H. Long and Irving (in Von del Chamberlain 1982:71), that Big Star connoted Venus as morning star: “After the Sun the most important of the celestial divinities among the Plains tribes is the Morning Star (Venus).” The principal identification with Mars confirms the opinions of Ralph Linton (1922b:2) and James Murie (1981:31, 41), a Skidi Pawnee of mixed blood who collaborated closely with anthropologists. Curiously, throughout the Americas, the epithet “big star” is usually applied to Venus, e.g. Miller 1997:299–302. As an analogy, the Dayak people, of Borneo, designated the planet Mars with the Malayan term *bintang timor*, “star of the east” (Hardeland 1859:67–68 s.v. “Bintang,” and 603 s.v. “Timor”; Perelaer 1870:176 n.1; Maaß 1920:42, 44; 1924:435), which is best understood as a reference to a morning star aspect.

That the contemporary Blackfeet understood the “real” and the “fake” morning star to be Venus and Jupiter, respectively, is confirmed by the fact that these two planets were in conjunction before daybreak on a day in July 1905, when an old man by the name of Brings-Down-the-Sun told the above story to anthropologist Walter McClintock, observing that “There are two bright stars that sometimes rise together, just before the sun comes up, Morning Star and Young Morning Star or Star Boy . . . I remember . . ., when I was a young man, seeing these two bright stars rising, one after the other, before the Sun. . . . For many years these stars have travelled apart. I have also seen them together in the evening sky. They went down after the sun.” On the conjunction he stated: “This summer, Morning Star and Poïa are again travelling together. I see them in the eastern sky, rising together over the prairie before dawn. Poïa comes up first. His father, Morning Star, rises soon afterwards, and then his grandfather, the Sun (McClintock 1992:498–499). Judging by the names “Morning Star” and “Young Morning Star,” the Blackfeet deemed the relation of these planets with the twilight most important, yet as they “very probably recognised them by their characteristic colours” (McClintock 1992:524), they were surely able to tell them apart throughout their entire courses.

So-son-do-wah and His Lover as Mercury and Venus?

From a comparative point of view, the possibility that So-son-do-wah and the girl he loved represented two morning stars offers a plausible solution to the question of the astronomical identity of these two denizens of Dawn’s lodge in the east. But which two planets would have corresponded to these legendary ancestors in their morning aspects? As a *caveat*, some traditional societies did not primarily define morning and evening stars according to their physical identities, but according to their functional roles. An example of the latter usage of the term “evening star” comes from the Mescalero Apache, of south-central New Mexico:

At Mescalero the name for Evening Star is *syus habagak*, star coming out. Sometimes this is the same as Venus; however, the first visible star in any night sky can be, and is, called Evening Star. Therefore, *syus habagak* should be considered a generic term, as it were, for the first visible star in the evening sky. When Venus is

in the west in the early evening, the Star Coming Out or Evening Star is Venus; however, when Venus is not a star in the evening sky, then this name is applied to whichever is the first visible star in the western sky. (Farrer 1986:60–61)⁷

Needless to say, the Mescalero people need not have been alone in their practice of naming the planets according to function rather than physical identity.⁸ If the Pawnee did indeed accept Mars, Venus, Jupiter and even a comet as a valid impersonation of Big Star on the day of human sacrifice, as long as Mars had completed its westward journey and been in conjunction with Venus as evening star in the western sky,⁹ it effectively follows that the principal criterion for the timing of the sacrifice was simply that it had to be a radiant object in the eastern sky at sunrise, a “morning star” in the functional sense of the word rather than any specific planet.

If the same mindset prevailed in other cultures, various cases of “confusion” from a western point of view no longer need to be dismissed as indicative of a lack of astronomical competence. For example, the inhabitants of the Society Islands styled the evening star *Fauma*, *Paupiti*, *Tou-rua* or *Tau-rua-o-hiti-ite-a-hiahi*, “twilight-rising Taurua,” and the morning star *Fetia-ao*, “star of day,” *Horipoipoi*, “dog of the morning,” *Horopoipoi*, “forerunner of morning,” and also *Tauroa* (Montgomery 1831:288).¹⁰ Assuming that these designations were proper to Venus only, Jacques Moerenhout¹¹ as well as Robert Williamson expressed

⁷ The Mescalero also acknowledge a second evening star, who is the younger and weaker brother of the first. The two are collectively celebrated as the Twin War Gods.

⁸ *Ginabongbearp* or “Foot of Day,” the name given to Jupiter by the Warkawarka people, of Tyrrell Creek and Lake Tyrrell, Victoria, Australia (Stanbridge 1857:138), may refer to Jupiter as a morning star. In that case, was this title exclusively used for Jupiter in its morning aspect?

⁹ “If a sacrifice is planned, the morning sky is watched for the return of the Morning Star, and when the appropriate time comes in the ceremonial cycle, whatever suitable object (Venus, Mars, Jupiter, a comet) that has appeared becomes the symbolic Morning Star for the ceremony” (Von del Chamberlain 1982:85).

¹⁰ An early missionary to Otaheite (Anonymous 1813:180) identified the evening star *Tou-rua* as Venus, but concerning the morning star recorded that “some suppose it to be a different star; others affirm it to be the same.” Ellis (1833:171) did not specify Venus at all.

¹¹ “...ils donnaient souvent les mêmes noms de *fauma* et d'*horipoipoi* à Jupiter” (Moerenhout 1837:181).

some surprise that these people applied the same names to Jupiter: “The planets Venus and Jupiter seem to have been confused with each other, either by the natives or by writers or both. . . . There seems to have been some confusion in identifying the morning and evening stars with both Venus and Jupiter” (Williamson 1933:122–3). A similar “mistake” was common on Mangaia, one of the Cook Islands, concerning the morning star or *Tamatanui*, “the eye of Tanē,” which was venerated as *Tanē-kio* or “Tanē the chirper”: “Venus, as the *morning* star, was called Tamatanui, *i. e. the eye of Tane*. The *evening* star was regarded as a different planet. [sic! MAS] being known as Takurua-rau. Jupiter was often mistaken for the morning star” (Gill 1876:44). “Sometimes the morning star is lauded as ‘*the eye of Tanē*’; at other times Jupiter, by mistake for Venus, attained this distinction.”¹² But rather than blaming these people for a “mistake,” these anthropologists might have more clearly acknowledged that Jupiter *does* sometimes appear as a morning star, the indigenous designations meaning “morning star” rather than a “Graecocentric” definition of “Venus” or “Jupiter” as a specific planet *per se*. Bafflement is absent in one of the earliest reports of this nomenclature, written on 10 January 1822: “The morning star (whether Jupiter or Venus) was called *Horo poi poi*, or *Tauroa*” (Montgomery 1831:288). In fact, the solution to the “confusion” was already embedded in one of Williamson’s own sources, according to which these Polynesians “connaissaient Mars, Vénus et Jupiter, mais non pas comme planètes, les confondant avec les autres étoiles, et ne le distinguent que par leur nuance et l’époque de leur lever” (Moerenhout 1837:181). Apparently, variations on *Tangaroa* — such as *Tauroa* — referred to the planet Venus in both of its aspects, while *Horopoipoi* or *Horipoipoi* as well as *Tanē-kio* indicated any morning star, whether Venus or Jupiter, and *Fauma* and *Paupiti* any evening star, whether Venus or Jupiter.

A similar situation obtains among the Khoikhoi, of southwestern Africa, who are accused of “confusing” the planets Jupiter and Venus.¹³ Among these people, Venus or *//kχa.nus* was called **ai!gūns*, “forerunner,”

¹² Gill 1880:38; regarding “the planet ‘Anui, Tanē’s eye’, *i. e.*, the morning star”, 1880:28. “Jupiter was often mistaken for the morning star, the mistake being between Venus and Jupiter” (Williamson 1933:132).

¹³ “Jupiter... by the Khoikhoi was sometimes confused with Venus...” (Walker 1996:312).

or **aogura//hā.b*, “the star at whose rising men run away (from illicit sexual intercourse),” as morning star and **!u.i/!kχo.eb*, “evening fugitive,” as evening star. “Der Jupiter ist den Hottentotten ebenfalls bekannt. Sie identifizieren ihn zuweilen mit der Venus, indem sie sagen, daß dieser Stern im Laufe der Wochen wie der Mond durch den Himmel wandere” (Schultze 1907:367–8; cf. Schapera 1930:414). That this “identification” was of a different nature than mere confusion is suggested by the relative sophistication of planet lore among these people; not only did they recognise the morning and evening aspects of Venus as belonging to the same celestial body,¹⁴ but they also correctly distinguished Venus from Mercury, called *//go.a/ga.ɿmiros* or “day-breaker,” whose visibility was aided by the comparatively short duration of the twilight this close to the equator.¹⁵ As Jupiter was characterised by a different name — **//a.egu/ga.miɿrob* or ‘middle star’ — when observed in the central part of the sky instead of the east or the west (Schultze 1907:368; cf. Wischniewski 1915:60), the Khoikhoi clearly could only have “confused” Jupiter with Venus in a deliberate fashion, namely in respect of the shared morning aspects of these planets.

Returning to the Iroquois, if they had a similar attitude to planets as the Mescalero people, the question whether So-son-do-wah was the morning aspect of Venus or Mercury may have been simply irrelevant, the essence being that he and his catasterised lover are only seen during twilight hours. However, a closer look at the myth suggests a precise identification with specific planets in this case. The attachment of the female “star” to So-son-do-wah’s “forehead” is best understood as an anthropomorphic indication of the tantalisingly close proximity of the two bodies, the upshot of the story being that the fateful paramours were never allowed either to stray far from each other or to remain together in a close embrace. This precludes the identification of one partner as Jupiter or Mars, who do, at times, appear in optically close

¹⁴) “Die Venus ist auch am Abend (*!u.ib*) nicht zu übersehen; sie wird vom Hottentotten als dasselbe Gestirn wie der Morgenstern erkannt” (Schultze 1907:367).

¹⁵) “Der Reisende im Namaland, der im Freien nächtigt, dem der Merkur von keiner langen Dämmerung wie in unseren Breiten überlichtet oder vom Morgennebel verschleiert wird, kennt die beiden Vorboten der aufgehenden Sonne und ihre Stellung zu einander” (Schultze 1907:366). The Khoikhoi do not observe Mercury as evening star.

conjunction with Venus, but often move well away from the east. Instead, the pair of Mercury and Venus quite neatly fit the bill. The antics of the two inner planets conform remarkably well to the Tantalus-like picture painted of So-son-do-wah and Gën-deñ'-wit-hă — forever close and yet forever beyond each other's grasp within the liminal zone demarcated by the light of dawn or the zodiacal light.

“Morning Star” Traditions as Myths of Catasterism

Although the hypothesis that So-son-do-wah and Gën-deñ'-wit-hă represented Venus and Mercury seen simultaneously goes some way towards an illumination of the myth, it does not account for the phases of temporary invisibility and evening star which Venus and Mercury both go through. Bearing in mind that, this far north, Mercury is very hard to detect at any given time anyway and contemplating the possibility that the Seneca people may also have allowed to view the evening stars as manifestations of So-son-do-wah and Gën-deñ'-wit-hă,¹⁶ it is probably best not to demand too much precision from aetiological myths of this type. At any rate, while the proposed hypothesis helps to clarify the astronomical identity the Seneca assigned to these two mythical characters, it certainly does not throw much light on the actual origins of the narrative content of the myth. In order to “explain” the motifs of So-son-do-wah's repeated journeys between heaven and earth in the form of a bird, including his final ascent, one will have to take account of the worldwide mythical motif of *catasterism* as a whole, for tales of legendary ancestors and heroes departing from earth so as to be transformed into a star or planet abound on every inhabited continent. The need for such an assessment becomes all the more pressing in view of some striking parallels observed in the astral mythologies of otherwise unrelated cultures. For instance, the theme of So-son-do-wah's forced employment in a “lodge” of the goddess of dawn forms a remarkably close analogue to the Greek passage about the demigod Phaethon in Hesiod's *Theogony* (8th or 7th century BCE):

¹⁶) In the creation myth, “Hah-gweh-da-ět-gäh set Darkness in the west sky, to drive the Sun down behind it”, “Darkness” being So-son-do-wah, (Converse 1908:35 and note 1).

And Eos bare to Tithonus brazen-crested Memnon, king of the Ethiopians, and the Lord Emathion. And to Cephalus she bare a splendid son, strong Phaëthon, a man like the gods, whom, when he was a young boy in the tender flower of glorious youth with childish thoughts, laughter-loving Aphrodite seized and caught up and made a keeper of her shrine by night, a divine spirit. (Hesiod, *Theogony*, 984–991, tr. Evelyn-White 1959:152–153)

If it may be granted that this Phaethon was identical to the son of Helios of the same name, So-son-do-wah's near-lethal plunge from the sky can be compared to Phaethon's tragic fall from the chariot of his father, which precipitated cosmic conflagration — especially if, as I have argued elsewhere, Phaethon's fall from heaven directly preceded his transformation into a star or planet at the hands of Aphrodite in the original, full version of the myth (van der Sluijs 2008).¹⁷ While Aphrodite in this capacity corresponds to the planet Venus rather than the Dawn, the classicist, Gregory Nagy, has convincingly argued that *Ēōs*, “dawn” and Aphrodite were functionally equivalent manifestations of the same goddess in the prototype of the story.¹⁸ Although it would be irresponsible to suggest a historical relationship of some sort between the myths of Phaethon and So-son-do-wah, the analogy does inspire the thought that the same or a similar transient astronomical event in the morning sky has been independently framed in these otherwise unrelated reports of a youthful mortal interloper on approach of the pole being “domesticated” as a morning star in association with a female lover or matron.

A substream of the classical tradition depicted Phaethon's fall, arguably preceding his abduction by Aphrodite, as the passage of a comet or a meteor.¹⁹ In view of this tendency, it is noteworthy that the Pawnee

¹⁷ More speculative parallels can be found. E.g., Ovid's wording (*Metamorphoses*, 2. 74–75, 129–136, 171–181, 295–297; cf. Seneca, *Hercules Oetaeus*, 675–681; *Medea*, 599–602; *Phaedra*, 1090–1092) suggests that Phaethon's chariot was headed for the north pole of heaven when the accident transpired, while So-son-do-wah's pursuit of the Sky Elk compares to the widespread North American motif of the chase of the bear that turns into the circumpolar constellation of Ursa Major or Ursa Minor.

¹⁸ “... the Hesiodic tradition seems to have split the earlier fused roles of mother and consort and divided them between Eos and Aphrodite respectively. This way, the theme of incest could be neatly obviated” (Nagy 1990:248–9; cf. Nagy 1979:200–1).

¹⁹ “But Phaëthon, fire ravaging his ruddy hair, is hurled headlong and falls with a long trail through the air, as sometimes a star from the clear heavens, although it does not

would apparently accept the appearance of a comet in the morning sky as a valid manifestation of Big Star accepting the sacrifice of a maiden; Dorsey observed that “the great comet of 1882 was believed by the Skidi to be the Morning-Star, who is spoken of as Opriiskisku, the Downy-Feather-Star, who was traveling from the north back to the east in a hurry” (Dorsey, in Von del Chamberlain 1982:60 note 2). In addition, “It was said that Morning Star originated from a meteor, and that as he traveled he carried a fireball either in his bundle or in his moccasins.”²⁰ Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to assume that the “flaming torch” in Gën-deñ'-wit-hă's hand, So-son-do-wah's free-fall and the tail feathers of the birds So-son-do-wah employed on his descents originally referred to similar “meteoric” features associated with mythical morning star figures. The common thread in such traditions about the morning star from different parts of the world then appears to be the transfiguration of a comet or a striking meteor in the morning sky into a “morning star,” whatever natural phenomenon may have provoked this impression.²¹

fall, still seems to fall” (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 2. 320, tr. Miller 1925:82–3); compare Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarius*, 1. 2. 109. 16–31; John Malalas, *Chronographia*, 1. 3 (7); Tzetzes, *Chiliades*, 4. 367–388. The account of Valerius Flaccus (*Argonautica*, 5. 471–478 (429–432)) suggests a meteorite.

²⁰ “The Morning Star and flint were both associated with meteorites.... These beliefs... indicate a Skidi awareness of the entire range of phenomena associated with meteorite fall, from the brilliant fireball to the fragments striking the ground” (Von del Chamberlain 1982:57, cf. 65–6, 245). On Huahine, in the Society Islands, the god Tanē, too, whose cult was subsequently transferred to Mangaia, was claimed to have “a very long tail, like a boy's kite,” which the missionaries, Daniel Tyerman and George Bennett, interpreted as meteoric or cometary (Montgomery 1831:266, 283).

²¹ The comet-like plasma tails of either Venus or Mercury may offer a tentative solution to the quandary posed by such ethnic accounts of morning stars displaying short-lived erratic behaviour. The “induced magnetotail,” consisting of “comet-like tail rays extending downstream of Venus” (Grünwaldt *et alii* 1997:1166) was first detected by NASA's Pioneer Venus Orbiter in the late 1970s. With the help of data obtained by Europe's Solar and Heliospheric Observatory (SOHO) Satellite in 1997, “Venus tail rays have been identified in the solar wind some 45 million km downstream of Venus” (Grünwaldt *et alii* 1997:1166), “more than 600 times as far as anyone realised” thus far and “almost far enough to tickle the Earth when the two planets are in line with the Sun” (Hecht 1997). “In this sense Venus can be likened to a comet, which has an induced magnetotail of similar origin” (Luhmann & Russell 1997:907). And in May–June 2007, scientists at Boston University confirmed the existence of a “sodium tail”

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or "a tail of escaping Na atoms" streaming away from Mercury, which was described as "a robust anti-sunward structure" of an "extraordinary length" analogous to similar tails streaming away from comets and the moon, with an estimated angular length of 3,400,000 kilometers or circa 1,400 times the radius of the planet (Baumgardner *et alii* 2008). With an aperture instrument configured as a coronagraph, the appendage "was easily seen against the twilight and the resonantly scattered sodium light from the Earth's mesosphere." The intensity and morphology of these tails depend directly on the condition of the solar wind, much like the auroras produced in the earth's ionosphere: "As is well known in cometary science, the spatial variability of a tail is determined by episodic changes in gas and dust source rates for neutral tails and/or by temporal changes in the solar wind for plasma tails" (Baumgardner *et alii* 2008). In addition, "the solar wind interacts directly" with Venus' induced magnetotail, too (Luhmann & Russell 1997:906): "the solar wind interacts directly with the planetary atmosphere and ionosphere much as with a cometary coma.... The tail rays would not, however, be expected to remain in a fixed geometry relative to Venus because variations in the direction of the solar wind must cause the tail rays to flap around..." (Grünwaldt *et alii* 1997:1163, 1166; cf. Luhmann & Russell 1997:907). For this reason, it is conceivable that the glowing plasma tails of Mercury and Venus will increase considerably in brightness at times of extreme solar storms, when the solar wind is more pronounced.

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Review Essay

The Lure of Empire

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Religion, Empire, and Torture: The Case of Achaemenian Persia, with a Postscript on Abu Ghraib. By BRUCE LINCOLN. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007. xvii + 176 pp. ISBN 978-0-226-48196-8 (cloth); ISBN 0-226-48196-4 (cloth) (cloth/hb.), 30 USD.

With the publication of four seminal collections of essays (*Discourse and the Construction of Society*, 1989; *Death, War, and Sacrifice*, 1991; *Authority*, 1994; *Theorizing Myth*, 1999), Bruce Lincoln, a former student of Eliade and (since 1993) professor of the History of Religions at The University of Chicago's Divinity School, has emerged as one of the most distinctive and prominent voices of the study of religion(s) in North America and beyond. Not quite unlike his teacher, in his research Lincoln covers a vast terrain of periods, places, and topics. His essays deal with, among other things, Guatemalan curanderismo, Lakota sun dances, Melanesian funerary rituals, Swazi kingship, the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre, Marco Polo, professional wrestling, and the theology of George W. Bush, to quote the selection provided on his homepage. In actual fact, his field of inquiry is much larger. Unlike his teacher, however, Lincoln's main focus is on the ideological and political underpinnings and consequences of the rituals and myths he studies. Lincoln's analyses are grounded in a type of analysis that can loosely be called historical-structural and his work is informed by a critical-discursive theory of religion unfolded in the first essay of his collection

Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11 (2003; see *Numen* 54/3, 340–351). Also the present volume, which “explores the contribution of religious discourse, imagination, and desire to emergent imperial ambitions” (xi), is occasioned by the post 9/11 events. Contrary to *Holy Terrors* and most of his previous writings, however, *Religion, Empire, and Torture* focuses on one single extended case study. It therefore more closely resembles a classical form of a monograph rather than a collection of various essays with a leitmotiv.¹

The case study he regards as “extraordinarily revealing” (xii) for the understanding of the ‘logic of empire’ is Achaemenian Persia (mid/late sixth century BCE to 330 BCE), “by far the largest, wealthiest, most powerful empire of the ancient world prior to the emergence of Rome” (xii). Besides Lincoln’s book, the early years of the present millennium have seen a renewed interest in that empire, witness two major exhibitions in England and Germany. Moreover, several prominent Iranian philologists such as Jean Kellens (2002), Éric Pirart (2002), and Prods Oktor Skjærvø (2005) have in recent years pointed to religious motives underlying Achaemenian imperial propaganda. Lincoln now likewise adopts that approach.² His main interest is, as he puts it, “how religion, empire, and torture can be interrelated” (16).

Lincoln makes it clear that he deals with the Achaemenians “as a spectacularly instructive example that lets us consider more general issues, not as an object of inherent fascinations” (16). As his postscript on Abu Ghraib (even featured in the title, perhaps also to increase sales figures) makes clear, Lincoln clearly expects the case-study to throw light on the imbroglio the US currently imposes on Iraq and the rest of the world. But it would be far too easy to dismiss Lincoln’s strategy of using Achaemenian Persia as a straw man to disguise a critical analysis

¹ The book has won the Frank Moore Cross Award for 2007 of the American Schools of Oriental Research.

² Lincoln points to two major influences (both from France): Clarisse Herrenschildt (to whom the book is dedicated), author of several important studies of the Achaemenian inscriptions published in the 1970s, and Marijan Molé who committed suicide when his groundbreaking work (providing an eschatological-ritual rereading of ancient Iranian religious history) was rejected as a doctoral thesis. In a note (on p. 110) Lincoln accuses the Italian scholar Gherardo Gnoli of having published an “aggressive” review of Molé’s work in 1965 (in RSO). Having reread that review, I cannot share Lincoln’s judgment, for Gnoli’s review is positive in the extreme!

of the foreign policy of the Bush administration.³ For this would not do justice to the insightful discussion of Achaemenian religious politics that Lincoln unfolds in this small, but dense book, which is, as most of Lincoln's works, brilliantly written and, again like most of Lincoln's writing, packed with figures and tables underpinning his arguments.

The reader will soon find that the chapters consist of a series of rather short sketches, fuller documentation often diverted to the endnotes. The brief sketches are mostly arranged like pieces in a mosaic rather than in a sustained line of argument. Unfortunately, the book does not have a proper conclusion. Nor does it have an index locorum.

Chapter One, entitled "Introduction" (1–16), presents a brief sketch of the Achaemenian Empire (between empire and torture, as it were) addressing the manipulations of dynastic genealogy, the careers and acts of two main monarchs (Cambyses and Darius the Great), some general features of the royal inscriptions as the main primary sources, and some thoughts on different categories of secondary sources. Lincoln finds that the disputed question whether the Achaemenians, or at least some kings, were Zoroastrians "of relatively little interest. Ultimately, I suspect that it is either unresolvable or simply a matter of semantics." (16) (Note that Lincoln elsewhere makes a lot out of issues others might find to be pure matters of semantics. Consider also that later chapters keep on referring to Zoroastrian literature as if they were part of an unbroken religious tradition. It is also noteworthy that Lincoln does not mention other cults that were practiced in Achaemenian times and therefore tends to present a rather homogenous picture of 'religion' in the Achaemenian Empire.) The chapter introduces some key sources and findings that are referred back to in subsequent chapters. In that sense, it serves as a repository of anticipated conclusions.

Chapter Two, entitled "Center and Periphery" (17–32), takes an analysis of the spatial division presented by a rock relief at Bisitun

³) David P. Gushee makes this point in his review in the *JAAR* (76/2 [2008], 489): "this is a book (an extended essay, really) whose text is imperial Persia and subtext is imperial America. The former gets 96 pages, the latter 10. Yet throughout the book, it seems clear that, in the heart of the author, text and subtext are reversed. This is really a book about imperial America, inspired by the revolting images from Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq sent around the world in 2004. The author has chosen to illuminate the meaning of Abu Ghraib through a careful study of imperial Persia."

(depicting the victory of Darius over the rebels) as its point of departure. Lincoln loosely relates the pictorial construction of space and spatial hegemony to cosmogonies in two Pahlavi (= Zoroastrian Middle Persian) treatises written down more than 1,500 years later. To my eyes, the Pahlavi texts adduced by Lincoln present at most an analogy, but clearly no homology. Lincoln's structural reading of the relief is brilliant, but his description stating "a radical contrast between God above and an archrepresentative of the Lie below, with the righteous King Darius between them" (17) is also significantly inaccurate, for the main opponent of the King is not "below" (in the sense of being lower than the other humans, including the King), but merely at the lower level of the frame; the Liar is also not directly underneath the winged figure interpreted by Lincoln (and others) as Ahura Mazdā, nor exactly "between" the God and his king, but is situated on the left of the vertical axis, underneath one foot of the King. Lincoln continues his spatial analysis by looking at the central (and by implication primary and dominant) position of Persia and the Persians within the mental geography contained in the list of countries in the royal inscriptions. He then proceeds to highlight the relationship between violence and tribute, "the reciprocal exchange of outbound violence for inbound wealth" (26) as one of "the reciprocal processes that constitute and maintain any imperial system" (25). Lincoln argues that "when those who define themselves as inhabiting the center also construe that site as more noble, more worthy, more moral than the periphery — as was true in Median, Persian, and general Iranian cosmology — they can theorize conquest as a benevolent act that brings benefit to the conquered." (26) That may well be true (if not a truism), but at this point Lincoln fails to provide direct evidence for this claim; the only source is a possible reconstruction of a likely Persian optic underlying an episode recounted by Herodotus (26–29). This is followed by a section in which Lincoln points to different views of the violability of contracts among Greeks and Iranians respectively; the more pragmatic attitude of the Greeks, Lincoln argues, would have made them appear as liars to the Persians, thereby confirming their position on the periphery, "from which perspective the proper response was to conquer and civilize them" (31). Lincoln here tries to reconstruct how the Persians themselves might have perceived the Greeks and their conflict with them. Referring to a quote

from an inscription by Darius to the effect that the goal of war was pushing the enemy far back from Persia [DNa §4] he once again points to the spatial (center-periphery) underpinnings of visions of conflict. Moreover, Lincoln extrapolates from the inscriptions the idea that the adversaries (Scythians and Greeks respectively) first had to be presented as lying (or being susceptible to the Lie) in order to make an invasion appear as legitimate; and he connects that to a Middle Persian text (again written some 1,500 years later) stating that Ohrmazd did not consider a pre-emptive strike but rather had waited for the adversary to attack first [Dd. 36,13]. While Lincoln reads that as articulating “the same idea in theological and cosmological terms” (32) I cannot fail to note the drastic differences between both sources: one legitimising pre-emptive strikes, the other de-legitimising them! The difference is striking if we follow Lincoln’s own lead and compare them to US policies: While the first version corresponds to the US propaganda claiming that Saddam lied about the existence of the weapons of mass-destruction — the lie was later revealed to be on the other side —, whereas the latter version would have required the US president first to wait for an actual attack by Saddam.

Chapter three, entitled “God’s Chosen” (33–49), starts by reviewing relevant sources reporting on, or constructing, the legitimate genealogy and the special charisma of Cyrus the Great. These sources include Herodotus, (Deuter-) Isaiah, and the Cyrus Cylinder, which, in Lincoln’s words, attests to “one of the great imperial fantasies”, namely the “claim that one’s armies are welcomed as liberators” (40). Lincoln then turns to the case of Darius the Great, who, in his inscription at Bisitun, “made a game effort to plead his cause in dynastic terms, but, like most usurpers, he was more inclined to stress the charismatic side of the argument” (43). In a very brief section, Lincoln argues that Darius had claimed that anybody who had seized power “without ritual confirmation of divine favor” (46) was illegitimate. Unfortunately, this claim, plausible as it may appear in theory, is not grounded in available evidence on Achaemenian rituals of investiture. In the following section, Lincoln analyses the five verbs that qualify 93% of the actions of Ahuramazdā in the inscriptions of the kings. Lincoln points to the very restricted radius of actions qualified by these verbs and (somewhat polemically) states that the Achaemenian monarchs “must have

wondered from time to time just why God was so good to them” (48), although that is of course not attested in the sources. The final section assembles several quotations from the Cyrus cylinder, Darius’ inscriptions in Bisitun, an Avestan hymn, and another inscription of Darius, connecting them loosely and suggestively, but without offering any sort of sustained analysis.

Chapter four, on “Creation” (51–65), follows up on the analysis of the verbs used to refer to divine actions and looks at the narrative of creation presented by the inscriptions. Lincoln makes a compelling case for distinguishing two temporal layers: Ahuramazdā’s world-ordering acts situated “in prehistoric eternity” (52) expressed with the verb *²dā-* versus his making Darius king, Ahuramazdā’s “intervention in history” (52) expressed with the verb *kar-*. Less compelling is Lincoln’s interpretation of the latter action as “something like a divine afterthought” (52), as a divine “response to some unexpected event” (52). Unfortunately this reading is not presented as a hypothesis but as a result of a strict philological analysis; in that way it allows Lincoln to create his own plot. There follows a brief section providing a structuralist reading (again inspired by Clarisse Herrenschmidt) commenting on Ahuramazdā’s first two creations (earth and sky). Among other interesting things, Lincoln here notes the “unusual, or at least counterintuitive” (53) order, namely of putting earth first. Lincoln finds that unusual with respect to “most of the world’s mythologies” (53), without elucidating the (structuralist? typological? cognitive?) implications of this sort of comparison. Closer to home, in an endnote, Lincoln refers to a verse from the *Gāthās* (Y. 37,1: “Mazdā Ahura... who ordered the lights and the earth and all good things”), that even uses the same word for earth (*būmī-*). However, another verse from the *Gāthās* (Y. 44,4) poses the following question to the Ahura: “Who held the earth down below and the skies (or clouds) from falling?” Although another word for earth (or land) is used here (*zam-*), the verse may show that such orderings are less static than structuralist readings would have it. Lincoln further notes that “Zoroastrian literature has something to say on this question [namely whether there is something below the earth (MSt.)] and offers a hint worth pursuing” (53). Instead of pursuing that hint in an analytical manner, however, we are offered a blank quotation of a passage from a Pahlavi book (Dd. 36,4–8). In the following

sections, Lincoln comments on the other items of Ahuramazdā's original creation as presented in the inscriptions, among them happiness. By referring to the work of other scholars, Lincoln here contrasts the understanding of happiness among "the Achaemenians" and "Zoroastrians" (55), as if these were incompatible classes and as if the latter were some sort of non-historical, fixed entity (and thereby also implicitly excluding that the Achaemenians could have been Zoroastrians). The chapter presents some interesting comparisons between Achaemenian inscriptions on the one hand and Avestan and Middle Persian texts on the other, where "many data show strong similarities" (59). For example, he points to "the temporal structure that distinguishes between three ontologically different eras — primordial eternity, history, and final (or eschatological) eternity — and the cataclysmic transitions from one to the other" (59). Note that this interpretation is the result of a rather synthetic synopsis. The chapter concludes with some interesting observations on the variants of the cosmogonic narrative contained in some later inscriptions of Darius and Xerxes, and the chapter closes with some general remarks on the way cosmogony and eschatology are interlinked in Zoroastrian texts.

The equally brief and dense fifth chapter entitled "Microcosms, Wonders, Paradise" (67–81) starts with a very short but excellent summary of the questions of mortality, sexual differentiation, and diversity in the Pahlavi books. Lincoln then reiterates the report of the upheavals as given by Darius. He concludes: "As in the Zoroastrian myths, this construction of historical conflict pits unity against diversity, truth against the Lie, with the empire defending the interests of God, morality, and progress" (69). As it is presented, this comparison, however, seems problematic in several respects (method, data, historiography, and perspective). Lincoln proceeds to Herodotus' statements on the Persians' expansionist hubris and presents reflections on the emergence of a terminology in the royal inscriptions that predicates the word for earth with imperial connotations, adding theological and cosmological dimensions to the political expansion. Lincoln also comments on a relief sculpture on the royal tombs as "a trope of empire and a microscopic representation of its current political power and geographic empire" (72). (Note that the relief does not show "a fire temple" [72] but a fire altar.) Lincoln then discusses the way the inscriptions present

the palace Darius built at Susa as another model for “microcosmical representations of the empire as world” (73). According to Lincoln all this bears witness to the global, universalistic, and eschatological implications of the political project of the Achaemenians (76). Somewhat conjecturally, Lincoln suggests identifying in the sumptuous banquets of the Persians “their intention... to reverse the fall⁴ by restoring the original unity of matter, perfection of all things, and happiness of mankind” (76). This brings Lincoln to a short presentation of the Persian institution and concept of the *paridaida* (> ‘paradise’), which some texts describe as “an all-embracing totality” and others as spaces of “mere abundance” (79). Lincoln connects this to the description of paradise in a Middle Persian text; pointing to correspondences between Achaemenian texts and the Pahlavi book (once again summarized conveniently in a table), Lincoln argues “that the paradises that the Achaemenians built on earth were meant to offer a foretaste of the delights awaiting the righteous after death and at history’s end” (79) and that “the salvific project that the Wise Lord had entrusted to the Achaemenian kings” (81) required the conquest of Greece (by incorporating some European trees in an Asian empire) in order to be completed. Towards the end of the chapter Lincoln remarks: “We are normally accustomed to view such arguments [claiming to restore primordial wholeness and setting right the afflicted cosmos (MSt.)] as legitimations and rationalizations: the discursive instruments through which guilty actors pretty up the record and soothe their conscience after the dirty work is done. Surely, it can be so. Yet it is also possible that constructions of this sort enter earlier in the game, actively motivating — and not just excusing — at least some of the actors and some of their acts.” (80) (This point has been similarly expressed by Gregor Ahn in his 1992 study of religion in Achaemenian politics.)

Having laid out a consistent, harmonious mosaic of the religious (salvific, eschatological, cosmological, central, elective, dualistic) project underlying the construction of empire, in chapter 6 Lincoln introduces “The Dark Side of Paradise” (83–96). He starts by contrasting the reports on the Achaemenian *paridaida* with a passage in the Avestan *Vendidad* (3,15–21) where the cognate word occurs. Lincoln vaguely

⁴) Note the (questionable) Christian terminology.

(speculatively) suggests that the “Zoroastrian [i.e. Avestan (MSt.)] paradise can be understood as a logical inversion of its Persian counterpart” (85). However, the main thrust of this chapter is an interpretation of a puzzling passage from Plutarch (written in 75 CE) who reports on the bestial treatment given, in 401 BCE, to a soldier by the name of Mithridates who had, under the influence of alcohol during a banquet, asserted that the rebellious brother of the reigning king Artaxerxes II had died by the wounds he had inflicted on him rather than being slain by the king. The relevant section from Plutarch, *The Life of Artaxerxes* (§ 16,2–4) describing the gruesome procedure reads as follows (in Lincoln’s translation):

Taking two troughs that were made to fit closely together, they laid Mithridates on his back inside one of them. Then they fit the other on top so the man’s head, hands, and feet stuck out while it covered the rest of his body. They gave him food, picking his eyes to force him when he resisted. They also poured milk mixed with honey into his mouth, and they poured it over his face. Then they turned his eyes constantly toward the sun, and a multitude of flies settled down, covering his face. Meanwhile, inside, the man did what it is necessary for people to do when they have drunk and eaten. Worms and maggots boiled up from the decay and putrefaction of his excrement, and these ate away his body, boring into his interior. When he was dead and the top was removed, people saw his flesh all eaten away and swarms of such animals surrounding his vitals, eating them and leeching at them. Thus, Mithridates was gradually destroyed over seventeen days, until he finally died. (87)

Lincoln presents a fascinating analysis of this report. For linguistic reasons Lincoln regards the treatment as “interrogatory” rather than punitive (88). While linguistically not implausible, this interpretation appears as somewhat cynical in view of the inevitable, cruel, and miserable death the soldier was subjected to.⁵ Besides, Plutarch makes it clear that Mithridates had died before the results of the ‘interrogation’ would have become visible (since the troughs revealing the state of his interiors were only opened when he was already dead). Lincoln then points to the necessity of the procedure in light of Achaemenian royal ideology. He also refers to the special position of the Lie in the Persian universe

⁵ For this cruel procedure including its medical aspects see now also Jacobs 2009. According to him, death ultimately results from blood poisoning (Jacobs 2009:126).

and draws a (rather conjectural) comparison between the suffering of Mithridates and of the sinners in hell according to a much later Pahlavi text (89–90). The next section presents a structural interpretation of the very procedure pointing to several aspects “with deep significance” (90), pointing to elements of ethics, cosmology, demonology, and eschatology. Lincoln’s captivating analysis is based on Zoroastrian views of milk and honey as well as of the process of digestion as attested in the much later Pahlavi books. I remain unconvinced of the interrogatory and legal nature of the procedure; I think that Lincoln himself provides powerful counterarguments for regarding this prolonged execution as a public display of the consequences of misbehavior (by lying) and undermining accepted social hierarchies and court etiquette with a known outcome. In the following section, Lincoln links this treatment to the “olfactory code” that “came to dominate the Persian imaginary of evil” (94), also mirrored by that king’s unique preference, in his inscriptions, for the word *gastā* (foul, stinking) when referring to what he asks the gods to protect him from (usually translated as ‘evil’). The final section of this chapter (94–96) presents a summary of the argument of the book.

The extended essay in which he reconstructs Achaemenian politics as a homogenous religious project is followed by the postscript on Abu Ghraib, which illustrates, if nothing else, that the structural reading Lincoln so successfully applies to the data from the Achaemenian Empire also lends itself to an analysis of US imperial politics. Among other things, Lincoln here claims “that the minidramas staged at Abu Ghraib were not designed to degrade the Iraqi prisoners. Rather, like the treatment of Mithridates by Artaxerxes’ soldiers, they were designed to confirm the captors’ worst suspicions concerning the Iraqis... The point was to establish that such people got what they deserved...” (103) Lincoln does not seem to realize that he is here contradicting his own interpretation of the Mithridates episode (which, he argues, was interrogatory rather than confirmatory). Moreover, the comparison with Mithridates does not hold because that procedure was a public performance, while Abu Ghraib was probably never intended to attract the worldwide attention it eventually received. Unfortunately, and somewhat surprisingly, the reader looks in vain for any reflections on the comparative project underlying the conjunction of text and postscript.

A general thesis Lincoln defends in this book is that religion (Zoroastrianism) in a first phase helps to establish empire (in that case Achaemenian Persia), by presenting a suitable framework to stage its “most aggressive tendencies and its most audacious ambitions as righteous, sacred, and holy” (95). In a second phase, then, “when the empire finds it increasingly difficult to contain the contradiction between its discourse and its practice” (95) and therefore “faces the possibility of moral exhaustion” (96), the leaders and foot soldiers alike face the need to “repersuade themselves”, possibly by staging “circular spectacles in which actions that would be considered brutish under any other circumstances produce results that (seem to) confirm the lofty principles that rendered them licit in the first place.” (96) Even if that claim is interesting as such and would call for comparative studies, it is difficult to see how the single example from Plutarch should be enough to validate it, even for the case of Achaemenian Persia. Source critical reflections (dismissed by Lincoln in favor of his structural method) make the problems even worse. Moreover, Lincoln fails to properly acknowledge other forms of public execution spectacles such as mutilations and impalements that are already attested in the ‘first phase’ of ‘paradisiacal’ empire construction and that are even mentioned by Darius in his propaganda inscription [DB §§32.33.43.50].⁶ Last but not least, the general validity of the scenario outlined by Lincoln for an analysis of US American history on a large scale (or even on the micro-scale of the era Bush) remains purely hypothetical.

In general, Lincoln holds that “[c]ontradictions between sacred discourse and bestial practice, as well as the dialectical relation between moral confidence and moral depravity, are built into the deep structure of empire, and, the longer imperial rule persists, the more episodes will accumulate in which these tensions manifest themselves painfully.” (96) Seen in this light, Mithridates’ treatment as described by Plutarch (and the scenes witnessed and reported from Abu Ghraib) are presented as results of historical necessity. While suggestive, statements such as these ultimately remain vague (and therefore they may appear as suggestive rhetoric) with regard to their epistemological status. Is this an

⁶ See Jacobs (2009) for the different forms of execution practiced by the Achaemenians and the contrast to the apparently peaceful modes of presentation in the visual arts.

embryonic theory of empire? Are we being presented with the political reflections of a critical observer or are we dealing with a structuralist theory (note the extensive use of binary oppositions resulting in a historical process)? In order to take the step from an interesting and finely laid out case study to the level of less impressionistic generalizations, in other words: towards theory, it would among other things be necessary for the religionist to engage with discourses and discussions in other relevant fields and disciplines dealing with ‘empire’ (and empires), violence, and torture. Such an approach could no longer avoid discussing the very concept of ‘empire’ (used more like a catchword than an operational-analytical-theoretical category by Lincoln) and would raise the question to what extent that term can throw light on such diverse political structures as the Achaemenian rule and the United States⁷ and its military presence in the Middle East (once upon a time ruled by Achaemenian kings). Lastly, dealing with torture as a universal and timeless instrument of power in empires may obstruct the view on the specific dynamics of the reappearance of torture as a sanctioned practice in the context of recent changes of the global order.⁸

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⁷ For the United States, Sardar/Wynn Davies 2002:65 voice the opinion that “it makes little sense to talk of Empire and American imperialism; indeed, such rhetoric and analysis are dangerously obsolete.”

⁸ For these developments see Gardell 2008a; 2008b.

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Book Reviews

Muslims as Actors. Islamic Meanings and Muslim Interpretations in the Perspective of the Study of Religions. By JACQUES WAARDENBURG, Religion and Reason, volume 46, Berlin — New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007. xviii, 471 pp. ISBN 978-3-11-019142-4. ISSN 0080-0848.

From his earliest publications, Waardenburg has devoted special attention in his work to issues of methodology and theory. In the book under review, he argues for more recognition of the way in which Islam is lived and experienced, studied, described, and interpreted in day-to-day reality by Muslims themselves. The meaning of Islam for Muslims personally, the meaning they attribute to Islam, and their construction of the meaning of Islam for them as believers must be central in this exploration. Waardenburg wants to move beyond the situation in which, in their understanding of Islam, Muslim and non-Muslim religious scientists and Islamic studies scholars have become predominated by Western interpretations in the field. Therefore he is searching for a theoretical framework with a well-argued and well-considered approach to the way(s) in which Muslims practise and interpret Islam in certain circumstances. Islam is not a closed entity whose meaning for believers is always the same, has not changed since its early beginning, and will remain unchanged for all eternity. It is true that Islam offers its believers a certain interpretation of reality but every believer can attribute his or her own meaning to this interpretation. Therefore, the lens of Islamic research must centre on Muslims who are continuously busy constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing the meaning of Islam. In short, the focus should be on Muslims as Actors. Only then will it be possible to do justice to the diversity and plurality of the Islamic world.

Muslims as Actors consists of an Introduction, followed by five 'thematic' parts, consisting of fifteen chapters. Ten of these have been published before but have been revised, shortened, or enlarged for the purpose of this book. In the Introduction, Waardenburg describes his *Werdegang*: he provides a number of biographical notes, necessary to place him and his work in the right context for fuller understanding. These notes include his education, the scholars who taught and influenced him, and the institutes and countries where he worked. The two chapters in Part One are devoted to two questions: "Can the

Science of Religion render service to the Study of Islam?” and “Can we study Islam as a signification system?”. Part Two: Issues in Islamic Studies consists of four chapters that deal with “Islamic Studies and the Study of Religions and Cultures”, “Some social scientific orientations in Islamic studies”, “Islamic studies and intercultural relations”, and “Presuppositions and assumptions in Islamic studies”. In the four chapters of Part Three: The Practice of Islamic studies in history, special attention is paid to a number of prominent Islamic studies scholars, on the one hand, and to several developments and trends in Islamic studies, on the other. The last chapter deals with the position of Islamic studies during the Cold War. In the three chapters of Part Four: Studying religions, different approaches to the study of religions are discussed, special attention being paid to the person and work of Mircea Eliade. Finally, in Part Five: Muslims and their Islam, Waardenburg comes to the central theme of his book: the argument that Islamic studies should focus on Muslims as Actors. Although each chapter is accompanied by a detailed bibliography, Waardenburg has included a broad reading list in Part Six, which can be used as a point of departure for those who wish to study or further explore the subject of this book. Three indexes round off the book.

Muslims as Actors is a rich and erudite book that bears witness to Waardenburg's long research interest in the study of religions and Islamic studies. Unlike many others, he always appreciated the need for interdisciplinarity within the study of religions and Islamic studies, whereby he himself tended more towards the theoretical and methodological aspects of the various disciplines than to the field work and the study of original sources that belong to these disciplines. The question remains, however, whether Waardenburg's preference for theory formation and methodology has not defeated the purpose of the book. After all, he wants to be rid of the Western predominance in the field of meaning attribution and interpretation in Islam and to focus mainly on Muslims as Actors. Most of the chapters in this book, however, are on Western approaches to the study of religions and Islamic studies. The attitude of Muslim religious scientists and Islamic studies scholars to these Western approaches and the way in which they deal with them is not discussed in this book. The reader is left wondering whether Muslims, in their study of Islam, find Massignon or Eliade or the classical phenomenological approach helpful. If yes, in what way? Or, in the negative case: why not? In other words, Waardenburg has not yet made it clear what exactly is the importance of and the relationship between the first four parts — however interesting and important — and the fifth part of *Muslims as Actors*.

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The Beauty of the Primitive: Shamanism and Western Imagination. By ANDREI A. ZNAMENSKI. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. ISBN 0195172310, 9780195172317. 40 USD.

This is an admirable book. Andrei Znamenski's *Beauty of the Primitive* is the most complete historiography of shamanism so far and, moreover, it is an erudite, detailed, and well-written intellectual and cultural history of what Znamenski perceives as the 'metaphor' of shamanism. *The Beauty of the Primitive* describes how, after explorers picked up the word shaman in Siberia, at the end of the seventeenth century, writers, anthropologists, and other scholars introduced the metaphor in different western contexts. Subsequently, a variety of interpreters, often overwhelmed by the supposed 'beauty of the primitive', imagined the shaman to suit their specific tastes. Before the 1960s, the metaphor primarily stirred ethnographers and psychologists but afterwards, American countercultural interpreters turned shamanism into a 'living spiritual technique' that acquired recognition among Western spiritual seekers. According to Znamenski, the growing 'appreciation of shamanism in the West is part of increasing antimodern sentiments, which have become especially noticeable since the 1960s' (x).

In nine chapters that include numerous fascinating tales, Znamenski leads the reader from Siberia to California and back to Siberia, where the metaphor gained a brand new esteem after the Soviet system collapsed. The book starts with the conceptions of eighteenth-century enlightenment and romantic writers and continues with the passage of the metaphor from Siberia to North America. The third chapter focuses on the process in which shamans, 'through the eyes of psychology' developed from 'neurotics to tribal psychoanalysts'. The three chapters that follow are devoted to the encounter of the psychedelic culture with 'tribal spirituality' and the subsequent 'increased attention to shamanism in humanities studies and popular culture since the 1960s'. Although Znamenski deconstructs contemporary shamanisms as products of the 'Western imagination', he does not denounce them and, in general, he does doubt the integrity of shamanists.

Quite the opposite, especially in the two chapters he based on his fieldwork among shamanists, Znamenski presents sensitive and friendly portrayals of contemporary shamanisms. He gives space to the 'spirit wars' against the 'whiteshamans' and 'plastic shamans' and he understands these detractors and their critical assessments of the appropriation of 'Native American Spirituality', but he primarily concentrates on 'the native's point of view', i.e. the attitudes of the 'spiritual seekers' that attend to shamanism. In fact, his sympathetic depictions of the protagonists form one of the strong points of the book.

Znamenski makes it easy for the reader to comprehend the ways shamanists ‘turn toward the ancient future’ and the ‘cultural and intellectual blend’ through which they draw upon ‘Native Americana’ and ‘pre-Christian European traditions’ as ‘sources of inspiration’.

The text contains a few peculiar mistakes. For instance, the book identifies both the Danish explorer Knud Rasmussen (69) and the Danish anthropologist Merete Jakobsen (280) as Dutch anthropologists. Still, throughout the book, Znamenski shows that he is both an accomplished historian and a skilled anthropologist. He ingeniously demonstrates the intricacies of the global routes of shamanism, especially with the last chapter, ‘Back to Siberia’, which is a noteworthy finale. In Siberia, where the metaphor started its journey to fame, shamanism has become radiant again, especially since the turn of the 1990s. Ironically, some of the new-fangled Siberian shamanisms base their practices on the image of the shaman as it was construed in the 1960s Californian counterculture. It does not prevent them from identifying themselves as part of an ancient Siberian shamanic tradition. Thus, on its remarkable diffusing route, the shaman metaphor eventually sunk his teeth into its own tail.

The Beauty of the Primitive is a great book and it is recommended to anyone interested in the historiography of shamanism and the ethnography of current shamanisms. Yet, it is not the definitive study of shamanism that makes other studies superfluous. There is more work left to do. For example, Znamenski does not mention Mme. Blavatsky’s description of her meeting with a ‘Tartar shaman’ and that is crucial as her theosophy was a groundbreaking force in the development of the milieu that transformed the shamanism metaphor into a modern practice. Moreover, it would seem that a less subjectivist approach would not depict Eliade’s *Shamanism* as the product of an anti-modern ‘phenomenologist’ that ‘rehabilitated spiritual practitioners in nature religions’ (171). Eliade’s political and traditionalist dispositions were more important for his interpretations than Znamenski seems to recognise. A sociological approach could relate the emergence of current shamanisms more closely to the emergence of the self-realisation narrative in neoliberal capitalism. Indeed, a study that would take the different forms of (perceived) power into account and that would concentrate on the strategies through which the various interpreters of shamanism authorize(d) their interpretations would offer a distinct other outlook on the genealogy of shamanism. Nevertheless, *The Beauty of the Primitive* is indispensable for any historical and ethnographic reflection on shamanism.

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Celibacy and Religious Traditions. Edited by CARL OLSON. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. viii, 321 S. ISBN 978-0-19-530631-6. ISBN 978-0-19-530632-3.

As the editor states in his preface, this book “is intended for an educated general readership and for use in college courses;... to be a supplement to other texts in introductory courses in various religious traditions...; to introduce students to the role of celibacy, or the lack of it, in various religious traditions” (vii). Although the book clearly exceeds these — rather modest — goals, readers better keep them in mind in order not to be carried away by the many fascinating issues the chapters address. The textbook character of this collected volume does not allow for in-depth studies of all issues, but it provides an excellent survey of celibacy — its role, its forms, as well as arguments for and against it — that opens up many possibilities for research which readers will be eager to pursue further.

After a general introduction, sixteen relatively short chapters (each about twenty pages long, including notes) discuss the role of celibacy — which here broadly refers to a practice of abstaining from sexual relationships for religious reasons — in various religious traditions and cultural contexts. Carl Olson assembled an impressive array of experts, among them a number of noted authorities in the study of asceticism, which brings about high academic quality. The rationale for selecting and defining the respective areas, however, remains obscure. The introduction makes a rather odd distinction by defining three major areas: “Monotheist traditions,” “Eastern religious traditions,” and “Non-Asian indigenous religious traditions.” The first category of “Monotheist traditions” includes a chapter by Willi Braun on celibacy in the Greco-Roman world, which was forced into this category “as a context for the discussion of Western and some monotheistic traditions” (Introduction, p. 9) although its content has no apparent relation to the other chapters in this category. These include one chapter on Judaism by Eliezer Diamond, three on Christianity, and one on Islam by Shazad Bashir. The chapters on Christianity are divided primarily by time period: Glenn Holland writes about the early church, Karen Cheatham about medieval Catholicism in the Latin West, and M. Darrol Bryant about the Reformation and later Protestant movements. The second category, “Eastern religious traditions,” includes two chapters on Hinduism divided along the lines of certain traditions within the religion — a chapter on the Brahmanical tradition by Patrick Olivelle and one on devotionism and Tantra by Carl Olson —; one chapter on Jainism by Paul Dundas; two geographically distinguished chapters on Buddhism — John Powers on Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, John Kieschnik on Buddhism in

East Asia —; one chapter on Daoism by Livia Kohn; and one on Shinto by C. Scott Littleton. The third category, “Non-Asian indigenous religious traditions,” includes a chapter on celibacy among the Yoruba by Oyeronke Olajubu; one on Native American Indians by Carl Olson; and one on pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica by Jeanne L. Gillespie.

As a reader of this type of collected volume which center around a theme, one might instinctively — and unrealistically — hope for some sort of comprehensiveness. But given the broad range of traditions and instances already covered in this book it is unfair to demand even more. Still, it seems useful to point out some peculiarities in the selection and arrangement of chapters and areas. Three religious traditions, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism, are examined in more than one chapter, perhaps due to their spread and/or the importance they ascribe to celibacy. There is no reason to assume a hidden Christian bias, but it may be noted that while Hinduism and Buddhism get two chapters each, Christianity gets three (— every other tradition gets one). The chapters examining these religions also illustrate three different ways of approaching religious traditions and thus reveal possible dark spots in the presentation of the respective others. Celibacy in the Christian tradition is presented primarily according to time periods, which ignores regions outside the near-East and Europe/North America as well as traditions other than Catholic and Protestant (for instance, later Orthodox Christianity or ‘heretical’ movements such as the Cathars). Hindu ideas of celibacy, here arranged by internal traditions, could also be examined according to time periods or regions (say, in ancient, medieval, and modern times, or in North and South India, Nepal, and Southeast Asia). Celibacy in Buddhism is presented according to regions, which requires the authors to cover many centuries and to abbreviate discussions of internal diversity.

To be sure, the chosen arrangement is by no means uncommon. It reflects conventional approaches to the respective traditions that have long been established in the history of religious studies: viewing the Christian tradition along the lines of Church History; dividing Hinduism into the orthodox Brahmanical tradition on the one hand, and all other movements on the other; and compartmentalizing Buddhism geographically. Jainism, a religion that strongly emphasizes an ascetic and celibate lifestyle, is granted only one chapter, although one can easily imagine several chapters, divided either by time period, by regional differences, or by internal diversity. Again, this is not uncommon, but it once more reveals the inadequate amount of attention certain religions receive in religious studies, compared to others. Generally, most chapters address historical, but rarely contemporary discussions about celibacy, and modern phenomena such as Eastern traditions in the West or Christianity in

parts of Asia may prove to be interesting areas of research on celibacy as well. Finally, the analytical value of grouping only “non-Asian” cases in the third category (“indigenous religious traditions”) is rather questionable. Given that the volume primarily intends to be a textbook that needs to be useful for many different purposes, the decisions made by the editor may be reasonable, but a clarification of the rationale for the arrangement and an explanation of the criteria for the selection would have been welcomed. In any case, the structure reflects the conventional emphases that have developed in scholarship on religion and thus also reminds us of dark spots that still need attention.

None of these remarks can diminish the quality of the individual chapters. The chapters that discuss religions with strong traditions of celibacy (Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism) all provide excellent and useful surveys of the respective practices, ideas, and discussions. And Carl Olson has to be particularly applauded for including a number of religions that are not exactly known for promoting celibacy: Greek and Roman religion, Judaism, Islam, Daoism, Shinto, and the three “indigenous” cases from Africa, North and Meso-America. By widening the scope to include, for example, the general control of one’s sexuality or to periods of temporary abstinence, the authors demonstrate that a closer look can reveal fascinating insights that enrich the discussion about the celibacy discourse. The book thus provides the reader with a variety of views about celibacy — some fully embracing the practice, some harshly condemning it, and many positions located somewhere in-between — and with a number of religious arguments for or against various forms of sexual control.

The editor leaves it almost entirely to the reader (or the course instructor) how they want to use the book, which has advantages and disadvantages. Surely the advantage is that no complete theory of celibacy is forced on the reader and that readers (students) can explore and interpret the concepts and practices on their own. Olson’s introduction gives a few useful hints at how one could systematize the material, mentioning keywords such as asceticism, purity, pollution, danger, violence, and pain, but he abstains from theorizing celibacy more comprehensively. The disadvantage is that the methodological elephant in the room — comparison — is not addressed. Readers (students) are to make up their minds on how to appropriately compare different cultural and religious contexts all by themselves, which can easily lead them into all kinds of essentialist traps that scholars of religion have cautioned about for decades.

Some more methodological and theoretical suggestions on how to systematize the material might have been helpful, but responsible instructors will be grateful for this excellent (and affordable) resource, not to speak of a general

readership. As a piece of scholarship, the volume can be viewed as a first step toward a comparative study of celibacy. By including traditions that are mostly critical of celibacy, one reaches a more comprehensive and nuanced view of the religious discourse on celibacy which also forms one component of the general discourse on asceticism. The book illustrates how putting an interesting question to experts in various fields can yield fascinating and sometimes unexpected insights and can open up new areas of research.

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The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism. Edited by JAMES R. LEWIS & JESPER AAGAARD PETERSEN. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2008. 774 pp. ISBN 978-1-59102-390-6.

The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism is a collection of articles dealing with Satanism, most of them previously published but with a few new ones added. Each of the book's five sections: Satanic Ritual Abuse as a Moral Panic; Satanic Ritual Abuse as Demonology; Satanism and the Media; Modern Satanism; and Primary Material, contain between five and eight articles, for a total of thirty chapters. From the very outset one can see that the book is heavily skewed towards discussing the so called "Satanism Scare", with only one section dealing with Satanism as a practiced religion, philosophy or lifestyle. This skew, however, does not extend to the introduction of the work, where approximately half of the text is devoted to religious Satanism and half to the Satanism Scare. The introduction also includes some of the best and most well-informed discussion on Satanism as a religion to be found in the book, and is thus a must read for those interested in this aspect.

Section one, Satanic Ritual Abuse as a Moral Panic, contains articles by David Alexander, David Frankfurter, Jenny Barnett and Michael Hill, Philip Jenkins and Daniel Maier-Katkin, Sherrill Mulhern, James T. Richardson, Susan P. Robbins, and Robert D. Hicks. Most of the articles in this section take a somewhat polemical approach in debunking claims of Satanic Ritual Abuse (henceforth abbreviated as SRA), but Alexander's article is by far the most extreme in this regard. While it needs to be taken into account that the article was originally written in 1990, in the heyday of the Satanic Panic, the argumentation is still overly aggressive. The author also makes an error in claiming that the *Necronomicon*, claimed by anti-Satanist Pat Pulling as an important source for Satanists, does not exist. In fact, there exist several different versions of the book, although none of these is the sinister book described in H. P. Lovecraft's fiction. Alexander's claim that occultists always spell the word magic with a K ('Magick') is also false. In fact, in the contemporary occultist milieu, and certainly among nineteenth and early twentieth century magicians, the spelling 'magic' would seem to be more common than the alternative spelling suggested.

The rest of the articles in this section are also involved in debunking SRA-claims, albeit in more nuanced and less polemic ways than in Alexander's article. Generally, the articles are lacking in analytical and methodological depth, although most of them provide somewhat interesting discussion on the construction and functioning of SRA-claims. At times the authors do make overly simplified claims in order to strengthen their argumentation. For exam-

ple, David Frankfurter seems to be a bit too quick to assert scholars' willingness to believe in extreme religious subcultures in history, and Philip Jenkins and Daniel Maier-Katkin trivialize both minority religious groups and popular culture in their attempt to downplay the danger of these groups. Jenkins and Maier-Katkin also make an error in claiming that Kabbalah is a 2000-year old fringe tradition. Most scholars of Jewish mysticism and Western esotericism would claim that Kabbalah is very influential in the European history of religions and trace the development of it to the twelfth century C. E. James T. Richardson's article in chapter six is the first one which provides a more detailed discussion of the social factors behind the SRA phenomenon, and this is a welcomed addition. The article by Bill D. Hicks is interesting in providing law enforcement perspectives, but is essentially similar to the rest of the articles in the section in its goal to debunk SRA-claims.

While some of the articles in section one of the sourcebook are an interesting read, the section as a whole quickly becomes repetitive. All the articles included are involved in debunking SRA-claims, which I in principle do not have any objections to. However, it is questionable if this many articles essentially doing the same thing were needed. Slightly different approaches and foci are assumed, but generally the perspective is the same. Instead, more focus could have been devoted to the social mechanisms of SRA, as in Richardson's article.

Section two, SRA as Demonology, continues in the same vein as the first section, albeit generally with more analytical and methodological depth. Many of the articles take a folkloristic approach, focusing on narratives of SRA and their realized and possible consequences. Véronique Campion-Vincent's, Jeffrey Kaplan's, and Phillips Stevens Jr.'s articles compare SRA-claims to other historical instances of demonizing the Other. Campion-Vincent describes how similar claims now attached to alleged Satanists have previously been used for both Jews and Christians, Kaplan discusses the WICCA-files, an alleged Satanist manifesto produced by anti-Satanists and modeled on the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and Stevens Jr. proposes a universal, possibly biological, basis for "Witch-fears", due to the narrative similarities in different cultures and historical periods. Bill Ellis article is different in detailing how a Satanic Panic-narrative can, in creating *communitas* through a mock ordeal, function in a therapeutic way and thus be a rational response to irrational fears. Jeffrey A. Victor's article in chapter thirteen deals with moral panics in general, discusses the origin of the term, and deals with the negative consequences they can have.

As more space is devoted to discussing the mechanisms and functioning of SRA-claims and less space to debunking them as a fact, the second section is far more interesting and compelling than the first one.

Of the three sections dealing with the Satanism Scare, the third one, Satanism and the Media, is by far the most interesting. Here we find articles by Ben M. Crouch and Kelly R. Damphousse, Asbjørn Dyrendal and Amina Olander Lap, Titus Hjelm, Randy Lippert, and Kathleen S. Lowney. Both Ben Crouch's and Damphousse's and Lippert's articles provide quantitative analyses of Satanism-related newspaper stories in the 1980s. The former comes to the conclusion that the newspapers are not moral panic entrepreneurs, and that so called "cult cops" should be regarded as more influential and important in this regard. Dyrendal and Lap compare Norwegian and Danish news reporting on Satanism from the early 1970s to the late 1990s, and conclude that the overall approach has been quite balanced in both countries. In his article on Satanism and the Finnish news media Titus Hjelm provides one of the clearest, most focused and well-developed theoretical frameworks in the book. In Finland, drug addiction has frequently been used as an analogy for adolescent involvement in Satanism. According to this rhetoric, youths "get hooked" on Satanism through role-playing games, heavy metal music, and the Internet. Kathleen S. Lowney's analysis of the treatment of Satanism in American talk shows from 1984 to 1991 is my favorite article in the book. The author discusses how talk shows contain very little spontaneity, instead purposely creating drama and looking for confrontational content. Lowney argues that when regarding the enormous popularity of US talk they can be seen as very important moral panic entrepreneurs, responsible for much of the creation of the Satanic Panic.

Section three is far more interesting and thorough than either of the two previous ones. At this point, however, one begins to question the accurateness of the volume title. Thus far 442 pages of the 772-page book have been devoted to media-created Satanic Panics, not to any form of Satanic religion or philosophy. While this is not a problem in itself, I feel that it should be more clearly recognized in the title of the book.

In the fourth section the reader is finally treated to scholarly texts on practiced Satanism, but unfortunately the quality of the articles included is very varied. Both Edward J. Moody's and Randall H. Alfred's articles provide interesting anthropological-sociological studies of the early Church of Satan. Moody discusses how magic and Satanism can function as a form of therapy through which the practitioner can gain an acceptance of his/her perceived "deviance". While both articles demonstrate the complex composition of the early Church of Satan membership they are lacking in more profound demographical data. Thus, the reader learns very little about the composition, ideology, organization, or history of the Church. There are also other problems with the articles. Moody presents the "career" of the Satanist in a somewhat

simplistic matter, and Alfred makes problematic assertions of possible “witchcraft remnants” in European culture. The latter author also claims the Church of Satan to be “the most highly institutionalized of the various forms of witchcraft”. Whatever is meant by “witchcraft” here one can find many magically oriented groups of equal or greater organizational complexity, such as the original Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. A further problem is that many of the falsities of Anton LaVey’s, the founder of the Church of Satan, life history are restated as fact.

Kathleen S. Lowney’s second contribution to the book, a very thorough and methodologically sound ethnographic investigation of rebellious teen Satanism, is on par with her other included article. The author acknowledges the problems with the majority of the research on “Satanism” as being conducted on the “Satanic panic” instead of on self-identified Satanists. Indeed, Lowney’s article successfully demonstrates that “both the psychiatric and folklore explanations of adolescent Satanism are inadequate” (525). Good discussion is provided on the complexities of culture(s), and some of Alfred’s points on the attractiveness of Satanism for adherents are further confirmed here. In her treatment of the ideology, motivations, and activities of Satanist teens, as well as of the importance of “Satanic style” and conscious positioning of oneself as the “Other”, the author successfully shows that adolescent Satanism is not about murder and mayhem, but primarily about rebellion and social critique.

James R. Lewis survey of self-identified Satanists, Jesper Aagaard Petersen’s article on Satanic presence on the Internet, and Graham Harvey’s thorough survey of the Satanic milieu in Great Britain are very good. Merja Hermonen’s study of youth Satanism in Finland, however, is less satisfying. Hermonen identifies five categories of Satanists but deals mainly with what she describes as “Rationalistic Satanists”. Too far-reaching generalizations are made from a limited source material consisting of ten interviews, and very problematic definitions and descriptions of Satanism and black magic are included.

The section on practiced Satanism is disproportionately short in comparison to the three prior sections dealing with Satanic Scares. Although modern Satanism is far from well studied, there exist other good articles and chapters that could have been included. For example, Massimo Introvigne — an international authority on the subject whose work is referred to in many of the included articles, and Jean S. La Fontaine, have produced work on religious Satanism. James R. Lewis article on the influence of the *Satanic Bible* on contemporary Satanism from the *Marburg Journal of Religion* would also have merited inclusion in this volume. While an interesting collection of articles, I am of the opinion that a book like Fredrik Gregorius’ *Satanismen i Sverige* (“Satanism in Sweden”, Malmö: Sitra Ahra Förlag, 2006), although having a

national focus, is more successful in capturing the scope of contemporary religious Satanism.

The last section contains primary source material, consisting of the much circulated anti-Satanist “Report of the ritual abuse task force”, FBI special agent Kenneth V. Lanning’s thorough study and debunking of “ritual child abuse”, and three articles by Satanists. With the great diversity of contemporary satanic philosophy and practice three articles are not enough to provide a comprehensive enough picture. More primary material could, and should, have been provided by self-proclaimed Satanists in order to better show the scope of Satanism. Other forms of primary sources that should have been included are some of the anti-Satanist writings and documents that are discussed at length in the early articles in the book. This material would have been interesting in itself, and would also have given a better context to the scholarly articles.

The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism is something of a hit and miss. If, on the one hand, the book is read due to an interest in the Satanic Panic nothing much is added to what can be found in Joel Best’s, David G. Bromley’s, and James T. Richardson’s *Satanism Scare* (1991) and Jeffrey S. Victor’s *Satanic Panic* (1993), which the editors agree are widely available. If, on the other hand, the book is read due to an interest in modern religious Satanism not enough substantial information is provided. It is true that works on practiced Satanism are scarce, and fortunately this will in some way be remedied by the forthcoming anthology *Contemporary Religious Satanism* (Ashgate, 2009), edited by Jesper Aagaard Petersen. However, *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism* does contain a number of very good and hard to come by articles on both the Satanic Panic and religious Satanism, and this makes book an interesting and worthwhile read.

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Charms, Charmers and Charming: International Research on Verbal Magic. Edited by JONATHAN ROPER. London & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-230-55184-8, ISBN-10: 0-230-55184-X.

Charms, Charmers and Charming is the third publication in *Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic* series. The book contains 19 scholarly essays by different authors and covers a vast terrain of themes related to research of witchcraft — charms, blessings, incantations, spells, charming, charmers and so forth. Seemingly, its title encompasses reference to the institutional establishment — Committee of Charms, Charming and Charmers at International Society of Folk Narrative Research where the book's editor is an active member. The book, continuing several researches by the same authors, could be regarded as a successor of *Charms and Charming in Europe*.¹ Indeed, with the exception of two essays, the geographical scope of this book does not transcend that of its predecessor. Nevertheless, it provides broad insight into multiple facets of contemporary charm-related research both with respect to its overall theoretical aspects and international diversity and research specifics stemming therefrom. The book is divided into two sections: *Topics and Issues in Charm Studies* and *National Traditions*. The former is dedicated mainly to theoretical issues, the latter — to regional or local specifics of particular corpuses or types of charms. Still, every essay contains both theoretical insights and local empirical material on charms.

This blend is particularly emphasized by Jonathan Roper in his comprehensive introduction where he describes contemporary research of charms and charming. Thus, the very context largely determines the structure of the book and the vast diversity of themes in the essays. For a long time charms have been outcasts, marginal curiosities in the shadow of vernacular studies that still prefer folklore genres like myths, legends, ballads and fairy-tales. This may explain why the Golden Age of the charm-related research dawned just in the first half of the 20th century with the first scientific collections of charms, methodological discussions, typologies and comparative research. This interest, however, was followed by several decades of silence that brought very few outstanding publications in the field. Although there have always been scholars who have dedicated their research to charms, only the last two decades can be regarded as a true Renaissance of the international research of charms and charming, to a great extent thanks to enthusiasts such as Jonathan Roper.

¹ *Charms and Charming in Europe*. Edited by Jonathan Roper. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

At this point it is relevant to stress the international dimension of charm-related research, both in general and in this particular collection of essays. This internationality stems, firstly, from the more international nature of charms in comparison to other folklore genres (it suffices to look at the multiple formulas with Christian motives that were spread across the whole Europe through the monastic milieu). Especially comparative research of texts is of utmost importance here, and one must also take into account the universal nature of magic. Secondly, the charm-related research is at a unique stage in its development in contrast to research in other folklore genres, characterized by more intense vernacular practices over significantly longer period of time. In the field of charm-related research, tasks like fieldwork and research in archives, building of collections and comparative research of particular types of charms, deconstruction of previous research and construction of the new methodological principles have been carried out simultaneously over the last few decades. Moreover, hand in hand with research of charms (i.e. texts or formulas) appears research of charming as a process and of persons involved — in social, epistemological, performance and other contexts. Thus, this simultaneity of various researches in a way dictates the eclectic character of the book. Another factor that determines the wide variety of themes in the collected essays is the fact that they mostly represent papers, read at the conferences in London (2005) and in Pécs, Hungary (2007).

The above-mentioned diversity is especially conspicuous in the first section of the book „Topics in Charm Studies” that also outline numerous trends in interdisciplinary research. They cross the boundaries of fields commonly associated with folkloristics such as social anthropology and linguistic studies, and reach into natural history, law and psychology. Here charming is analyzed by Laura Stark in the light of history of law, providing insight into Finnish rural life and magical reality that ruled before the contemporary system of social guaranties; in particular, practitioners of magic are observed, contextualizing their deeds in such setting. Of special interest there are means of strengthening magicians’ reputation. Similarly, just from broader point of view, Ulrika Wolf-Knuts observes functioning of charms as a means of psychological coping. Paul Codwell continues with somewhat practical approach. In essence, he analyses specific type of charms — protection against rats or so called rat-lore — in light of natural history. Thus, he reveals exact prerequisites to their functioning in the real world. Ritwa Herjulfstdortwen, at the same time, explores beyond the charming itself. Through analyzing snake charms in Swedish-speaking areas, she discovers gender-specific traits in transmission of charms. Structural approach is to some extent applied by Vladimir Klyaus who systematizes narrative elements in Slavic charms. Almost a contrast to his

broad comparative analysis is research carried out by famous English scholar Jacqueline Simpson. She demonstrates potential for mutual enrichment between literature- and charm-related studies through following the history of a charm in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. In a similar manner, specifics of spreading of charms are observed by T.M. Smallwood. In her analysis of Middle English charms she enlightens about their Christian origins and background, peculiar circulation patterns in the particular time period, and the influence of the latter on conformity and originality of those charms. Returning to the basics, i.e., analysis of the charms' content, contribution of a well-known researcher Éva Pócs and couple Natalia Glukhova and Vladimir Glukhov must be mentioned. They look for impossible in charms, and in their work the reader finds references both to impossible phenomena in Transylvania and detailed analysis of impossibility and inevitability in Mari charms.

Also the editor Jonathan Roper himself recognizes that division into theoretical and practical sections is fairly artificial: "The topics and issues found in the first section of the book often overlap (and indeed spill over the book's second section too). And although scholars in the second half of the book concentrate more keenly upon national traditions, many of them explicitly try to position their material in a comparative, international context. While research on national traditions, establishing corpora and their characteristics, is a goal sufficient in itself for some researchers, for others it is a key stepping stone in the development of charm studies more broadly" (xviii). Actually, none of the authors could do without quotation of particular national charms in the first part of the book anyway.

The same pattern is noticeable in the second section — regardless of the regional origin of the charms the essays themselves provide theoretical insights in certain approach to charms or manner of academic writing equally well. Thus, the reader can discover benefits of the comparative method in essays by Andrei Toporkov about Russian love charms and by Daiva Vaitkevičienė — on searching for parallels in Latvian and Lithuanian charms. Similar approach is used by Monika Kropey in description of national corpus of charms in comparative light. Her essay aims to position of Slovenian charms between south Slavic and central European tradition. Other essays are dedicated to specific Serbian and Finnish charms, verbal charms in Malagasy folktales, charms and charming in Georgia and Malay Archipelago. While (theoretically) a larger part of this section focuses on questions of typology of charms or just extends insight in one particular charm type or national tradition, Lea Olsen stands out with her analysis of set of late medieval manuscripts containing charms. Through painstaking library work she has investigated leechcraft remedy books in meticulous detail. Interestingly, the editor himself whose

latest monograph is a rigorous study on English verbal charms (*English Verbal Charms*, FF Communications, Helsinki: 2005) has chosen his research *Estonian Narrative Charms in European Context* for this publication. It must be mentioned that from the theoretical standpoint his essay relates with the subject of typology of narrative charms that was the focus of the symposium in Tartu, Estonia that took place in May, 2008 and was co-hosted by Jonathan Roper.

In summary, thanks to its eclectic manner this book is a perfect source of information on what has happened in the field of charm-related research lately. Last but not least, those who are interested in specific themes, methods, or types of charms will find the editor's introduction and the detailed table of content with sub-headlines of essays particularly helpful. Charming, indeed.

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When Rituals Go Wrong: Mistakes, Failure, and the Dynamics of Ritual. By UTE HÜSKEN, *Numen* Book Series: Studies in the History of Religions, vol. 115. Leiden: Brill, 2007. ISBN 0169-88 34170.

As stated in the Introduction, *When Rituals Go Wrong* is “the first attempt by a group of scholars to address the issue of ‘ritual failure’ as a topic in its own right in the study of ritual” (1). The anthropologists included in this volume examine ritual mistakes in various contexts (including ancient Greece, the Pacific Islands and South Asia) and disciplinary fields (including German language, psychology, and religious studies). Their goal, as editor Ute Hüskén states, is to investigate “the implications and effects of breaking ritual rules, of failed performances, and of the extinction of ritual systems” in order to offer “new perspectives on the ritual procedures, on the interaction which constitute these procedures and on the context in which these actions are embedded” (ix). In so doing, this volume opens up a largely unexamined line of inquiry for scholars of ritual in various disciplines.

The papers included in this volume grow out of a working group sponsored by the Collaborative Research Centre on Dynamics of Ritual (Germany), and earlier versions of several of the essays were presented at the 2004 American Academy of Religion annual conference. The resulting volume is a mature collection of essays from anthropologists working on traditions around the globe. The book organizes these scholars’ writings into four sections. Section 1, “Mistakes, Procedural Errors and Incorrect Performances,” addresses the various ways in which rituals can go wrong procedurally, touching also on how ritual errors are identified and evaluated. Section 2, “Preventive Measures and ‘Quality Control,’” focuses on the strategies used either to prevent ritual errors or to stave off the potential negative consequences of those errors. Section 3, “Contingencies and Emergence,” includes discussions regarding ritual efficacy, that is, whether or not a ritual succeeds at achieving its intended outcomes. The chapters in this section note that the term “efficacy . . . denotes a wide range of phenomena: the effects of a ritual postulated on a doctrinal level, its (immediate or long-term) social consequences, the fulfilment of individual expectations, empirically detectable effects, unexpected outcomes, and so on” (197). Section 4, “Competing Perspectives: The Discursive Production of Ritual,” explores various discourses about ritual activity, and the ways in which these discourses reveal conflicting perspectives on the nature of ritual, ritual authority, social and ritual hierarchies, and the relationships between the ritual, social, and political realms.

Edited volumes always run the risk of presenting disjointed arguments; *When Rituals Go Wrong* is particularly successful at framing a coherent conversation

about the fact and implications of “rituals gone wrong.” Edward L. Schieffelin’s thoughtful Introduction lays the groundwork for the essays in the volume, focusing on articulating the broad disciplinary significance for studying ritual errors, referencing each of the essays within the volume as he makes his case. Each of the four major sections of the collection begins with a brief preface, transitioning the reader from the previous discussion to the next, and introducing the individual papers, noting their individual arguments and identifying broad themes that link the essays. For example, Section 1 includes six papers, ranging from Axel Michael’s exploration of ritual perfection and errors in the Vedic tradition, to Burckhard Dücker’s essay “Failure Impossible?,” which examines public rituals in modern Western cultures, to Jan A.M. Snoek’s treatment of Masonic ritual performances. All of the essays included in this section examine the presumed “standard of success” within the traditions they study, as well as the relative “elasticity” of the overall ritual system, determining which errors are ignored, which are corrected, and which are ultimately appropriated into standard ritual practice. The essays as a group raise questions about the emergence of discourses surrounding mistakes, discourses that reify the rule structures that undergird ritual systems. Throughout the book, the prefaces to each section frame the individual papers and draw the reader’s attention to broader issues associated with ritual errors.

Not surprisingly, some sections are more fully developed than others (Section 2, which includes only two papers, could be more robust), but overall the volume works very well as a sustained argument for the significance of studying ritual mistakes. The collection concludes with a strong essay by Hüsken (“Ritual Dynamics and Ritual Failure”) that makes the case not only for the work done in this book, but for further research on ritual errors: “the definitions and examples of ‘ritual failure’ and ‘error’ — and how they are coped with — prove the existence of decisive norms for ritual actions.... [T]his slightly unusual view opens up new perspectives on ritual rules, expectations, procedures, and on the interactions which constitute these procedures and their context. ‘Failed ritual’ directs our attention to ‘what really matters’ to the performers and participants and others in one way or another involved in a ritual” (337).

When Rituals Go Wrong makes a significant contribution to ritual studies in a number of ways. As the editor and several of the included authors observe, there has been no sustained study of ritual errors as a general ritual phenomenon. Sociological and anthropological studies of specific ritual events have noted specific ritual failures, but they do not take ritual error into their broader ritual theorizing. Even Clifford Geertz, famed for studying the errors involved in a Javanese funeral, focused on what we learn about the social and political

life of the community — not on what we learn about ritual systems or the nature of ritual more broadly. More recently, other scholars (Jonathan Z. Smith, Ronald L. Grimes, Edward L. Schieffelin) have presented discrete conversations about ritual error. However, there has been no sustained conversation about how the study of ritual error can contribute to our broader understanding of specific, complex ritual systems and the nature of ritual activity in general. *When Rituals Go Wrong* initiates this conversation. The volume does not offer any definitive answers; rather, it opens up a broad discussion, suggesting specific avenues for exploration, both within specific traditions and through different perspectives on ritual activity. As such, this volume will be of interest to scholars with interests in the comparative study of ritual and ritual theory.

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Ancient Greek Divination. By SARAH ILES JOHNSTON, Blackwell Ancient Religions. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008. 193 pp. ISBN 978-1-4051-1572-8 (hbk.)/-5 (pbk.) \$89.95/\$27.95.

Ancient Greek Divination is a stimulating introduction to divination practices in ancient Greece. Sara Iles Johnston offers a detailed overview of the places, experts, users, and literary and social discourses involved in this religious field that is of central significance in the study of ancient Mediterranean cultures. Written in a fluent style, the book is accessible to anyone interested in the field. Furthermore, it is also a valuable source of reference for scholars engaged in broader research in the study of religion and antiquity, since it provides both a broad panorama of divination phenomena, their specific settings and nuances, and outlines the sources used to reconstruct them.

The author articulates her work in five main chapters. In the first section, the field of research is presented and delimited. Starting with an analysis of discussions of divination in antiquity, its methods, rules and functions, the study leads on to the history of modern research on divination, noting how, for many decades, this subject lay at the margins of scholarly attention. Here particular attention is paid to the relationship between divination and magic. As a result of these explorations, the aims of the study are then stressed. Although it does not exclude Roman sources, the book concentrates on Greek practices. As a heuristic category for structuring the broad field, the author prefers the dichotomy between institutional oracles and independent diviners rather than the ancient emic distinction between “natural” and “technical” types of divination. This strategy is used for the main structure of the book. Consequently, chapters 2 and 3 deal with institutional forms of divination at Delphi and Dodona (2), and Claros, Dydima and other places (3), while the following chapters focus on *manteis*, first as described in archaic, classical, and Hellenistic sources (4) and, secondly, as a particular figure — *mantis*, the magician (5). The bibliographic references are listed at the end of each chapter and ordered into three categories: general introductions to the topic, particular studies of selected aspects, and sources consulted. An index of the quoted sources and a subject index conclude the monograph.

By stressing the difference between institutionalised and individualised divination types, the study gives a precise classification to distinguish different aspects of this intriguing and multi-layered practice that encompasses more than a “religious” dimension in a restricted sense, for it assumes social and cultural functions. Divination, as a form of communication between the divine and the human worlds, influences several fields both of social and indi-

vidual life. As a central aspect, institutionalised divination is intrinsically bound-up with particular places. Delphi and Dodona are centres of divination that have a trans-regional significance. Following a selection of the main places of divination, the author provides insights into different techniques illustrated by literary, iconographical or archaeological evidences. Certain forms of divination, such as the Pythia in Delphi, incubation oracles in different places, or lead tablets, mirrors, and dice can better be understood within specific, locally anchored traditions than from a supposed ontological common element labelled as “divination”. The religious-historical comparison of different techniques practiced at the same site, reflect a range of forms of divination performed by professional, freelance diviners. Here, under the influence of chapters 2 and 3, the reader is tempted to read the person of the *mantis* as a bodily place of divination, a place where the relationship between the expert and the common individual is indeed at the core of the practice.

As stressed above, the present volume successfully tries to balance an overview with an analysis of individual sources. Of course, the literary sources play the dominant role, since the Greek and Roman literature we have at our disposal encompass several primary sources, supplemented by a particularly broad range of secondary sources on the topic. Nevertheless architecture and iconography are also closely considered. The attention given to various kinds of sources and their specific languages emphasise the widespread character of divination through different levels of social belonging and cultural discourses.

The volume presents an articulate grid of ideas, definitions, and concepts of divination from different perspectives. Within the analysis of ancient sources, everyday usages and semantics are, sometimes implicitly, related to intellectual approaches. Associations with divination practices in the contemporary world are used to stress the relevance of the topic and to suggest a possible historical continuity. Finally, the reconstruction of the history of research on divination and magic complete the range of approaches. This kaleidoscopic approach to the field of divination and magic is enriching and mirrors the ambiguity evidenced in the range of perspectives on those practices in both the ancient and the contemporary intellectual world. In my opinion a more determined adherence to a functionalist approach to divination and magic would permit a clearer orientation in the triangulation of emic and etic perspectives both within the sources and between descriptive, critical perspectives in ancient intellectual approaches and in modern theories.

To conclude: *Ancient Greek Divination* is an enriching, illuminating reading in ancient practices and discourses on divination. It interprets phenomena

that are not only crucial within ancient societies but which also continue to exercise a deep influence on European and Western religions traditions.

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Review of South Asian Religions on Display: Religious Processions in South Asia and in the Diaspora. Edited by KNUT A. JACOBSEN. London: Routledge, 2008. 224 pp. ISBN 10: 0-415-43736-9 (hbk.).

South Asian Religions on Display is a slender volume of fourteen separate essays of between 10–15 pages each. Reading it is like reading a volume of poetry. Each essay is carefully trimmed and worthy of a second reading, but in the end the underlying themes are never treated in an extended way and we never understand why South Asian religion in particular tends to express itself in this ritual form. I am not sure it is the proper role of a reviewer, but because I like so many of the essays I am tempted to tentatively propose some underlying themes.

I start with Pierre-Yves Trouillet's account of a traditional village goddess festival of South India because it confirms earlier accounts of Whitehead (1921), Dumont (1959), this reviewer (1980, 2002) and others. In most villages the goddess is called Māriyamman but in Kerala sometimes Bhagavati (Younger 2002), in Sri Lanka sometimes Kālī (Bastin 2002), and in the village Trouillet writes about Mailiyamman. What makes Trouillet's essay so attractive is that he is trained in social geography and provides maps to show how the procession is set in motion when the deity from the Brahmanical temple visits the goddess, then how the procession of the goddess moves around the houses of the land-owning Vanniyar's, and then off to the much feared demonic boundary beyond the Paraiyar settlement. In this village the tensions between the Vanniyaars and the lower caste Paraiyaars are kept under control by the annual ritual that makes the Paraiyaars the protectors of the village against evil spirits.

The wonderfully insightful essay of the late Selva J. Raj comes from much the same social environment. In this case the village of Puliampatti is overwhelmed by the popularity of the festival based in the Roman Catholic church of St. Anthony. In spite of the Catholic setting, the basic threefold social structure is evident as the priests provide a ceremonial opening, the wealthy families bid for the ritual privilege of managing the festival, but the evil spirits are dealt with during the period when the lower classes take over the festival and act out the *vratas* or vows they have made and by ascetic actions make their bodies into mediums of spiritual power. Selva Raj is unequivocal about the spiritual environment the Hindus and Catholics share: "Tamil Hindus and Catholics not only share a common physical and cultural geography but draw from or share common religious assumptions, a worldview, conceptual framework, ritual sources and material culture. . . . This phenomenon of shared systems serves as a metaphor for the culture of dialogue that defines South

Indian religious praxis.”(85) Borrowing my phrase “playing host to deity” (Younger 2002) he argues that the festival provides the local society a safe opportunity to both reflect its social solidarity and at the same time explore its social divisions.

I suspect that if Matthias Frenz had had the opportunity to read either of the essays already discussed he would not have been so surprised that the worshipers at the Catholic shrine of Velankanni turn a deaf ear to the priests’ efforts to link the local version of a goddess-like figure with the Marian figure of Lourdes. In true South Indian style, the worshipers in Velankanni see their object of worship as nothing less than the center of both the local society and the cosmos.

Once again from the same South Indian region, Isabelle Clark-Decès’s contribution to our poetic collection shows how the Paraiyas of Viluppuram rebelled against their traditional ritual role as the ones who could sing “death songs” at funerals and chase the evil spirits, which are let loose in this liminal moment, away from the village. When she was doing field work in 1990 the traditional pattern was in place, but when she came back in 1999 the Paraiyas were now called Dalits and were offering marching bands to lead the funeral procession in a more cheerful direction. Her thoughtful question is how much of a conceptual and social change goes with that ritual change — if, indeed, it is continued?

Turning to the North of India, both Gregory Booth in his essay on the brass wedding bands that accompany the groom to the wedding and James Lochtefeld in his essay on Naga Sadhus who march in the Kumbh Mela, focus their essays on the complications that have arisen as these traditions have continued to be practiced in a rapidly changing social environment. Both authors have written elsewhere about why public display was an important part of the traditional celebrations of these events, and it is helpful to have scholars with such expertise reflect on the recent ritual changes.

Kristina Myrvold’s essay on the way the Sikh scripture is personified and treated as an honoured social being in ritual settings is helpful in the detail it provides. She is careful to avoid comparisons to the way Hindus treat their deity images and to the doctrine of revelation underlying the Muslim treatment of scripture, but her avoidance of those issues tends to leave the reader with a neat but not-thoroughly-interpreted sense of the Sikh practice.

There are three essays on the mysterious and controversial South Asian ritual practice of Muharram. Watching Muharram processions in India and reading about them in all the indenture-based societies to which Indian workers were taken, I always promised myself I would someday study them in detail and see why they are so deeply rooted in the Indian religious system.

These three essays make me feel that good scholars have already tried to answer that question and it might be unanswerable. Hugh van Skyhawk's fascinating translation of a shephard's oral tale from the medieval Deccan embeds the story of Husain and Hasan as protector deities in the essentially Hindu account of the seven goddesses in whom the lower classes put their trust. Mariam Abou Zahab's essay does a nice job of showing how both Hindus and Sunni Muslims of South Asia came to look to the minority Shia community's ritual celebration of the deaths of Husain and Hasan for religious inspiration. The ritual touching of the taziehs or caskets, the links to the female associates of the martyrs, the healing power of the mystical horse Zuljinah, and the public shedding of blood from the self flagelation are all linked with forms of popular religion widely seen in India. While Mariam Abou Zahab argues that the reforms of Muharram proposed by Islamic leaders outside South Asia have largely been ignored by the masses within South Asia, Stig Toft Madsen and Muhammad Hassan argue that the fatwa issued from Iran by Ayatollah Khamenei in 1994 has had a major influence, both in making Muharram a Shia-only festival once again and in moderating the practices so that donating blood to bloodbanks has begun to replace the blood-letting associated with flagelation. As interesting as these three essays are I am not sure I am much closer to understanding why South Asian spirituality in India and in the indenture-based diaspora took such a deep interest in this ritual practice in the first place.

Finally, we turn our attention to the forms of South Asian procession one finds in the diaspora. The editor, himself, seems most interested in this area, and perhaps originally thought that the volume would be directed primarily at the new questions raised by processional practice in this setting. As it turns out, there are only four essays from the diaspora and they tend to deal with the practical issues involved in managing the processions in the context of a pluralistic religious setting and have little to offer on the deeper religious need to express religion in a processional form. Vineeta Sinha's essay on the practical problems of dealing with the dominant police authorities of Singapore focuses on the new processional ventures of the Krishna temple and the family that has its Māriyamman image brought to the street from its twelfth-storey apartment. The third example is from the temple of Sri Sivan that has roots that go back to the early Nineteenth Century when processions had much deeper ties to memories of the homeland, but in the urban setting of today it is very difficult to recreate the feelings that would have been associated with their experience of the new homeland. It might have been helpful if Sinha had found some way to link this traditional festival with its past, because we know that in other places Malaysian Hindu festivals have long been spectacular.

Kumar's account of the Hari Krishna's chariot festival on the beach in Durban, South Africa suffers from the opposite problem in that he gets caught up in portraying this tourist trap event in all its secular glory. In this case the mayor and other municipal officials not only allow the procession onto the roads, but lend their presence and all the assistance the tourist board can offer. What we need in this case is an account of why the temple processions that date back to the Nineteenth Century were able to remain intensely religious events for Hindus at the Isipingo, Second Umbilo and Umgemi temples even as they too became nationally known celebration.

The two essays that remain are on the scenes in Germany and Norway where the South Asian traditions of processional worship were forced to recreate rituals, which were originally popular social events, in the alien, if not hostile, social environment of northern Europe. Luchesi's essay carefully documents the steady development of Sri Lankan Tamil temple groups in the different cities of Germany and the tentative efforts they are making to take annual festivals into the streets. The processions include the ascetic practices of carrying kavatis hooked to the flesh, people rolling on the ground and even being carried along suspended from a hook through the flesh at the back. Native Germans generally remain indifferent, secure in the modern version of the traditional mono-culture that understands these ritual practices to be a peculiarity of this immigrant group. Jacobsen's essay on processions in Norway shows how similar the Tamil temple procession of Oslo is to that found in Germany. Once again the Norwegian public is indifferent, but the procession ends up out of the city (as it often does in India and Sri Lanka) where *sraddha* rituals for ancestors can be held at a lake in a forested area. Norway also provides a setting where the relatively small Sikh community makes a very public display of its community with a parade on the busy downtown streets with banners written in Norwegian, and where the Sri Lankan Catholics are invited to celebrate their statues of St. Anthony and Our Lady of Madhu at events arranged by the four Tamil clergy serving in the country.

Each of these essays is well worth reading, and one can hope that as scholars join together to pursue a question such as this that now involves community groups scattered right across the globe that our understanding of these phenomena will steadily grow.

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Corrigendum

Corrigendum to “The So-called Hell and Sinners in the Odyssey and Homeric Cosmology” [*Numen* 56 (2009) 185–197]*

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The author regrets that an error was introduced into the caption of Figure 2 of the article listed above. The correct caption should read:

Figure 2. Osiris from the Tomb of Haremhab: Hornung 1999:70, fig. 34.

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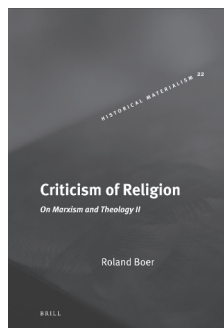
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Shin Buddhism, Authority, and the Fundamental Law of Education¹

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Abstract

This article takes its cue from one of the most controversial issues in the contemporary Japanese scene, the 2006 complete revision of the Fundamental Law of Education, that includes among its objectives the cultivation of patriotism, the high evaluation of Japanese tradition and culture, and the promotion of general knowledge regarding religion in public schools. Within this framework, the role of religion in education indeed represents a sensitive subject, which entails once again reinterpretation of the issues of the separation of state and religion, and the freedom of religion, which are enshrined in the Japanese Constitution. There have been reactions to this revision from various religious institutions, ranging from support to overt opposition. What is argued here is that these responses are meaningful to understanding some of the major dynamics currently at work within the Japanese religious world, and their implications for the issue of religion and authority. In this respect, the Shin Buddhist position may be seen as a way of contesting the claims of authority by political institutions, and affirming an alternative authoritative discourse on the basis of selected doctrinal sources, and a positive approach toward globalization and the differentiation of religion, politics and education.

Keywords

Shin Buddhism, Japanese religions, functional differentiation, globalization, religious education

¹) This research was supported, in part, by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. I would also like to thank Martin Repp, Elisabetta Porcu, and an anonymous reviewer for their careful reading of the manuscript.

Introduction

In 2006 a complete revision of the Fundamental Law of Education (*Kyōiku kihonhō*) was implemented by the Japanese Diet. This revision to the law, the first since its enactment in the immediate postwar years, comes after a long process that formally started in 2000 with the institution of a private advisory body for the prime minister. This reform process has been accompanied by resistance from the opposition parties and sectors of civil society, such as the Japan Teachers Union, the Japan Society for the Study of Educational Law, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations, and other networks of citizens. In addition, there have been various reactions also from the religious world, which are quite relevant for the study of contemporary Japanese religions. Here, I will focus on the distinctiveness of the reactions to the revision of the Fundamental Law of Education offered by Shin Buddhism (*Jōdo Shinshū*) in comparison with those of the Japanese Association of Religious Organizations and the Japan Buddhist Federation, to highlight the implications of the reactions for the issue of religion and authority. In this connection, I will discuss how the use of religious authoritative discourses within the context of the revision of the Fundamental Law of Education can be framed in terms of reactions/contributions to the process of globalization.

The Fundamental Law of Education, Japanese Religions, and Shin Buddhism

The Japanese Fundamental Law of Education was enacted in 1947 in order to clarify and establish the aim and foundation of public education for the new democratic state. Generally speaking, the law set the standard for an effective separation of secular education from politics and religion, to overcome the ideological overtones of Japanese wartime education. The immediate consequence of this was the absence of religious education as a subject in all public schools, while private schools were allowed to offer this subject. Starting from 1958 and 1960 respectively, however, classes in moral education (*dōtoku*) and ethics and society (*rinri-shakai*) were instituted in public schools with an emphasis on authoritarian values which were taught in prewar time, thus marking a

“tendency toward a partial return to the old educational system” (Khan 1997:112–113, 210).

Regarding the debate on religious education in Japan, this subject is usually divided into three categories: sectarian religious education (*shūha kyōiku*), education in religious knowledge (*chishiki kyōiku*), and education in religious sentiment (*jōsō kyōiku*). According to Dorothea Filus, the latter is by far the most controversial type, to the extent that

The current debate on religious education in public schools is concerned with the question of whether or not religious sentiments and ideals can ever be independent from religious convictions. (Filus 2006:1040)

The implication here is that if religious sentiments are controlled by religious convictions, they should not be taught in public schools. Indeed, concern for education in religious sentiment was one of the priorities in the agenda of the Central Council for Education (Chūō Kyōiku Shingikai). This advisory panel to the education minister issued a report on *The Fundamental Law of Education and the Basic Promotional Plan for Education in a New Era* (*Atarashii jidai ni fusawashii kyōiku kihonhō to kyōiku shinkō kihonkeikaku no arikata ni tsuite*) in March 2003, on the basis of which the draft amendments to the Fundamental Law of Education were developed (Chūō Kyōiku Shingikai 2003). In this connection, one of the main arguments used by the political system to justify the revision of the Fundamental Law was the need to face issues such as bullying, violence, nonattendance at school, classroom breakdown, and increasing criminality among juveniles (Chūō Kyōiku Shingikai 2003).

The draft amendments that passed the Diet on 15 December 2006 pertain to a series of highly controversial issues.² Among these, one can find for example the revision of the provision concerning the freedom of education from “undue control” (*futōna shihai*) in Art. 10 of the original law (presently Art. 16); the appearance of “public spirit” (*kōkyō*

² Cf. the web site of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (Monbu-kagaku-shō) [www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/kihon/about/06121913/002.pdf], accessed 22 July 2008. See also Franz (2007), Lebowitz and McNeill (2007), and Tsujimura (2007:51–55).

no seishin) among the values to be esteemed (Preamble); the disappearance of esteem for “individual value” (*jishuteki seishin*) from Art. 1; the insertion of “general knowledge regarding religion” (*shūkyō ni kansuru ippanteкина kyōyō*) as a point to be valued in education (Art. 15); and references to the “sense of morality” (*dōtokushin*), “respect for tradition and culture,” and “love for the country and the homeland” (*dentō to bunka o sonchō shi, sorera o hagukunde kita wa ga kuni to kyōdo o ai suru*) in Art. 2. A concern shared by many of the opponents to these amendments is that the government is actually attempting to reintroduce elements of the ultranationalist education system of wartime Japan. It has also been observed that “public concerns with juvenile delinquency, with the increase in crime rates and the general crisis within the education system” have been “cleverly exploited by conservatives both inside and outside the LDP” (Liberal Democratic Party) to return to prewar ideals (Filus 2006:1049).

From just a brief look at the reactions to this revision from various Japanese religious institutions, it is possible to notice different approaches, ranging from support to overt opposition.³ The Japanese Association of Religious Organizations (Nihon Shūkyō Renmei),⁴ which represents Japan’s five largest religious associations, submitted as early as December 2002 a petition to the Central Council for Education, and in January 2003 a statement expressing the necessity of reevaluating the role of religion in public education to counter the loss of values that characterizes modern society (Nihon Shūkyō Renmei 2003). This was not to be achieved, however, through the promotion in the Fundamental Law of “sectarian religious education” (*shūha kyōiku*), but of “religion as a cultural phenomenon” (*bunka to shite no shūkyō*). As for the Christian community, the revision has been criticized by various groups, such as the National Christian Council (Nihon Kirisutokyō Kyōgikai), and the

³ Cf. Yamauchi Sayoko, “Kyōiku kihonhō kaisei o suishin suru shūkyōsha no dōkō,” in the web site [<http://www.peace-forum.com/kyokasho/1106kousin/t0114-2.htm>], accessed 23 July 2008.

⁴ The Japanese Association of Religious Organizations represents the Japan Buddhist Federation (Zen Nihon Bukkyōkai), the Association of Shintō Sects (Kyōha Shintō Rengōkai), the Association of Shinto Shrines (Jinja Honchō), the Japan Confederation of Christian Churches (Nihon Kirisutokyō Rengōkai), and the Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan (Shin Nihon Shūkyōdantai Rengōkai). Cf. the official web site [<http://www.jaoro.or.jp>], accessed 24 July 2008.

Reformed Church in Japan (Nihon Kirisuto Kaikakuha Kyōkai). Within this context, the role of religion in education represents a sensitive subject that is related to the issue of the freedom of religion contained in the Japanese Constitution and to the past ideology of State Shintō (*kokka Shintō*) taught in wartime public schools. Expressing quite different concerns, the Association of Shintō Shrines (Jinja Honchō) has lamented, in addition to the failure to delete the reference to “undue control” in Art. 10, the lack of any reference to religious sentiment in Art. 9. This last issue is also present in the reaction offered by the Japan Buddhist Federation (Zen Nihon Bukkyōkai), which represents the large majority of Buddhist institutions in Japan. The Federation submitted, as early as February 2003, a petition for the revision of Art. 9 of the Fundamental Law (now Art. 15) to the Central Council for Education. In this and other similar documents one finds not only that public schools “should refrain from sectarian religious education,” but also that they should promote the “acquisition of basic knowledge of religious traditions and culture,” which was actually inserted in Art. 15 of the new Fundamental Law of Education, and the “fostering of religious sentiment” (*shūkyōteki jōsō no kan'yō*), which is not to be found in the amended draft.⁵

Interestingly enough, there has also been opposition to the revision process from within the Japan Buddhist Federation, especially from the Shin Buddhist religious community. Shin Buddhism (Jōdo Shinshū), a major denomination of Japanese Buddhism, is a distinctive Japanese expression of Mahāyāna and Pure Land Buddhism mainly elaborated by Shinran (1173–1262), a disciple of Hōnen (1133–1212) who had been formerly trained as a Tendai monk at Mt. Hiei. This tradition is characterized by absolute reliance on the working of Amida Nyorai and the teaching of other-power (*tariki*), which considers one's self-power (*jiriki*) in performing good practices as an obstacle to the achievement of *shinjin* — the entrusting faith which is accompanied by saying Amida's name (*nenbutsu*) — and birth in the Pure Land.

Within the two major branches of Shin Buddhism, the Ōtani-ha and the Honganji-ha, various groups of activists have severely criticized the revision process of the Fundamental Law of Education. Groups such as

⁵ *Zenbutsu* 486, March 2003:2; and 505, January 2005:5.

the 2000-nen Tōzai Honganji o Musubu Hi-sen/Heiwa Kyōdō Kōdō (2000: Joint Action of East and West Honganji for Anti-war/Peace), and the Nenbutsusha Kyūjō no Kai (Association of Nenbutsu Practitioners for Article 9), for example, maintain that in this way elements of the wartime ultranationalist education system are being reintroduced in an attempt to create an updated version of Japanese militarism.⁶ However, a guarded attitude or even overt opposition is to be found also at the institutional level. In September 2003 the Kyōiku Kihonhō ‘Kaisei’ ni Hantai Suru Kai (Assembly Against the ‘Revision’ of the Fundamental Law of Education), a group including about half the members of the Religious Chamber of the Ōtani-ha Diet (Ōtani-ha Shūgikai), issued a document opposing the views expressed by the Japan Buddhist Federation. According to this document, educational and social issues (bullying, classroom breakdown, etc.), which are often indicated by the supporters of the revision of the Fundamental Law as the main causes of the decay of education, are addressed in a simplistic and unsatisfactory way. The real aim of the reform, it is argued, is to educate new generations of citizens who could support a country ready to fight (*sensō o suru kuni*). This is why, the document concludes, the favorable position expressed by the Japan Buddhist Federation for the revision of the law is not acceptable to Buddhist practitioners who respect the dignity of life (Kyōiku Kihonhō ‘Kaisei’ ni Hantai Suru Kai 2003). It may also be argued that another factor behind this criticism was the presence among the main supporters of the revision (as well as of the promotion in public school of “religious sentiment”) within the Japan Buddhist Federation of Iwagami Chikō, who was also president of the General Assembly of the Honganji-ha (Honganji-ha Shūkai).⁷

This can perhaps also account for the more cautious attitude of the Honganji-ha administration, which, in 2006, issued two official statements about the revision of the Fundamental Law. The last of these statements, which was addressed to the prime minister in December 2006

⁶ A similar approach may be observed in various groups where Shin Buddhist activists are networked with other religionists, such as the Kenpō Nijūjō ga Abunai! Kinkyū Renrakukai (Article 20 of the Constitution in Danger! Emergency Liaison Group), and the Kokuritsu Tsuitō Shisetsu ni Hantai Suru Shūkyōsha Nettowāku (Religionists’ Network Against a National Site for Mourning). Cf. Dessì (2007:154–160).

⁷ Cf. *Zenbutsu* 486, March 2003:2.

after the enactment of the draft amendments by the Japanese Diet, is a letter of protest mainly lamenting the fast and sloppy way of dealing with such a delicate issue (Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha 2006b). In the other one, dated the month before, the criticism of the Honganji-ha for the lack of a deep discussion that included all sectors of civil society (which should have preceded any attempt to reform the Fundamental Law) is also accompanied by the concern that, despite the importance of religious education, any imprudent amendments to the draft may lead to repetition of the same mistakes of Japan's unfortunate past (Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha 2006a).⁸

A more detailed criticism of the draft amendments can be found in another official statement, which was issued by the Ōtani-ha in June 2004. In this document the defense of the Fundamental Law of Education is strictly linked to that of the Japanese “peace” Constitution and its underlying principles, namely, democracy, pacifism, and respect for human rights. The revision to the Fundamental Law of Education is seen, similarly to the Law Concerning the National Flag and Anthem (1999), the distorted views of Japanese history inserted in school textbooks, and other recent political measures, as further proof of the government's excessive intervention in the educational sphere to promote nationalism. In the Ōtani-ha statement it is strongly asserted that children's lives are not for the state; rather, education should follow the ideal of self-formation of the individual. The text then recalls the past uncritical attitude of the Ōtani-ha, which led to cooperation with the Japanese war effort. The deep reflection that has taken place on these issues within the religious community, eminently expressed in the *Anti-war Resolution* (*Fusen ketsugi*) issued in 1995, provides the grounds for opposing any policy that would compromise the constitutional values of pacifism and equality (Shinshū Ōtani-ha 2004).

While there was no official reaction by the Ōtani-ha when the draft amendments passed the Japanese Diet on December 2006, in April 2007 a symposium was organized at the head temple (Higashi Honganji) concerning the issue of the revision of the Japanese Constitution

⁸) It should also be mentioned here that the issue of the revision of the Fundamental Law has been widely discussed within the Kikan Undō (Central Movement) of the Honganji-ha. Cf. the web site of the Honganji-ha [<http://www2.hongwanji.or.jp/kikan/houkoku/houkoku.html>], accessed 26 July 2008.

and the Fundamental Law of Education within the context of the Memorial for the Victims of All Wars (*Zensenbotsusha tsuichō hō-e*) and in concurrence with the *Haru no hōyō* (Spring service).⁹ Moreover, the yearly issue of the *Shinshū bukkuretto shirizu*, a booklet series of the Ōtani-ha publishing department, has been completely devoted to the same theme (Shinshū Ōtani-ha 2007). This official publication, which also features contributions from intellectuals such as Takahashi Tetsuya and Ko Samyon, is presented by the editors as a collective reflection on the way Shin Buddhist practitioners can reformulate their aspiration to peace in the face of the current changes in politics and society. Significantly enough, this reflection is linked to the aforementioned statement issued by the Ōtani-ha in June 2004, where the draft amendments to the Fundamental Law of Education had been severely criticized (Shinshū Ōtani-ha 2007: 102).¹⁰ Similarly to this past statement, in the editors' afterword the revision of the Fundamental Law is seen as consistent with those policies attempting to weaken the "peace" Constitution (notably its Art. 9, which contains the "renunciation of war"), and create the basis for the participation of Japan in new armed conflicts. Within this context, the attribution of the decay of education and traditional culture to defects in the Fundamental Law is considered a mere expedient to insert "patriotism" as a value in public education. All this, it is suggested, goes against "the *nenbutsu* practitioners' aspiration for peace" (*nenbutsusha no negau heiwa*) and the creation of a "society of fellows" (*dōbō shakai*) (Shinshū Ōtani-ha 2007:102).

The Fundamental Law of Education, Authority, and Globalization

What emerges from the previous analysis of the positions concerning the revision of the Fundamental Law of Education is the presence of different and even contrasting discourses centered on the educational sphere. On the one hand it may be observed that the Japanese government is apparently trying to reintroduce in public education elements

⁹) *Shinshū* 1235, February 2007:18.

¹⁰) Within this context reference is also made to another official statement issued by the Ōtani-ha in June 2005, opposing the constitutional revision planned by the ruling parties. Cf. Shinshū Ōtani-ha (2007:88–89).

of past nationalistic rhetoric, such as “love for the country and the homeland,” “sense of morality,” and to exercise stricter control of the centralized educational system. In this regard, the fact that the “fostering of religious sentiment,” which has been petitioned by various religious quarters, has not found a place in the amended draft may be also interpreted as a sign that the ruling parties are leaning toward the incorporation of religious elements in the educational and political spheres as “customs” or “traditional values.” A similar approach may be seen, for example, in the Yasukuni Shrine issue, and can be traced back to the Meiji period with the definition of State Shintō as a “non-religion,” which aimed to provide the ideological framework to the new national state (cf. Hardacre 1989:39, 145).

On the other hand, various reactions emerging from the Japanese religious world ground their claims of authority in the potential of the religious tradition to solve the problems of modern society. In this regard, an interesting example is offered by the Japanese Association of Religious Organizations (*Nihon Shūkyō Renmei*), where different religious sensibilities and priorities have been seemingly negotiated in order to reach a balanced position on the Fundamental Law. As mentioned above, one of the main arguments used by the political system to justify the revision of the Fundamental Law is the need to face issues such as bullying, nonattendance at school, and criminality among juveniles (*Chūō Kyōiku Shingikai* 2003). In the aforementioned statement issued by the Japanese Association of Religious Organizations in 2003, these and other pressing issues are related to the loss of social influence by religion.¹¹ According to the text, the dominance of economic efficiency and materialism has led to the neglect of “spiritual culture,” a deficiency that should be addressed by religionists through pressure for the promotion of religious education in public school. Here it is also affirmed that religion has traditionally played an important role in society by providing adequate patterns of behavior, the foundations for spiritual life as well as spiritual care, concern and respect for others,

¹¹ *Nihon Shūkyō Renmei* (2003): “... ‘respect’ for life is neglected, ‘concern’ for others has been lost, atrocious crimes and juvenile problems are increasing, morality in politics and economics is decreasing, many social problems are before us. Behind this situation there are many causes, but we must admit that one of these is unfortunately the decline of the influence that religion should exert upon society.”

which are all the more indispensable in the present situation. In this way, despite the specification that all this should be achieved through the promotion of “religion as a cultural phenomenon” (*bunka to shite no shūkyō*), the Japanese Association of Religious Organizations is ostensibly pressing for the reevaluation of religious elements in public education as the source of morality and civic sense. That this role, in the Japanese case, might be mostly played by Japanese religions is suggested by the following passage:

We may think that within the process of globalization the search for internationalism and universality is becoming increasingly important. However, at the same time, the peculiar cultural traits of various countries and people are equally important. Each country presents its own distinctive religious situation... (Nihon Shūkyō Renmei 2003)

In other words, it may be argued that the Japanese Association of Religious Organizations is trying to reconcile two contrasting applications of religious education in public schools, namely as an academic discipline and as the source of moral behavior.¹² It may be observed that this position acknowledges the superiority of religious communication over some aspects of secular education, thus implicitly justifying some degree of interference of religion in the educational system.

These claims of authority become more explicit when one considers the reactions offered by other religious agencies, such as the Association of Shintō Shrines (*Jinja Honchō*) and the Japan Buddhist Federation (*Zen Nihon Bukkyōkai*). The Association of Shintō Shrines has been from the beginning one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the revision (cf. Tsujimura 2005:28). Nonetheless, the association has openly criticized the lack of any reference to religious sentiment in Art. 15 (formerly Art. 9) of the amended draft. This last criticism, as seen above, has also been expressed by the Japan Buddhist Federation (*Zen Nihon Bukkyōkai*). Diverse though their emphases and underlying motiva-

¹²⁾ Of course, there are also approaches to religious studies that would more or less explicitly promote religion as the foundation of “humanity,” as in the case, for example, of Mircea Eliade’s conception of the “sacred.” However, despite the enduring ambiguities in the definition of the field of Religious Studies, this can hardly be considered the current mainstream self-understanding of the discipline. Cf., for example, Rudolph (1989); and Whaling (1995).

tions may be, it may be observed that both the Association of Shintō Shrines and the Japan Buddhist Federation ground their discourses in the superiority of religious communication over the secular. The Japan Buddhist Federation, however, makes this claim of authority more explicit. This approach is apparent, for example, in the aforementioned 2003 statement by the Japan Buddhist Federation, in which the cause of various issues (juvenile delinquency, class and family disruption, etc.), and other educational problems are related to the lack of religious moral education in public schools, which was prohibited by the old Fundamental Law. This excessive disregard of religious education could be overcome, it is suggested, through the prescription for public schools “to refrain from sectarian religious education for a specific religion” (*tokutei no shūkyō no tame no shūha kyōiku*), which would open the way to general religious education in the classroom.¹³ What the Japan Buddhist Federation actually means by “religious education,” however, emerges quite clearly from the following passage:

If we take into account the understanding of other cultures in an age of internationalization, there is also an indication that the study of other religions worldwide is important. However, as far as the reform of Japanese education is concerned, first of all, fundamental knowledge and understanding of Japanese religions should be provided until the level of secondary education. On the basis of this the educational effort for the cultivation of a religious sentiment effective for character-building would be constructive, in accordance with the requirements of the time.¹⁴

Thus the Japan Buddhist Federation, though formally acknowledging the separation between secular education and sectarian religious education, grounds its claims of authority on the assumption that Japanese religions are superior both to secular education and other “foreign”

¹³) Technically speaking, the Japan Buddhist Federation was calling for the substitution of “religious education” (*shūkyō kyōiku*) with “sectarian religious education” (*shūha kyōiku*) in Art. 9 (section 2) of the Fundamental Law of Education. This change has not been enforced in the 2006 amended draft. However, it may be seen that the insertion of “general knowledge regarding religion” (*shūkyō ni kansuru ippantekina kyōyō*) as a point to be valued in education in the current Art. 15 (section 1) conveys a similar meaning.

¹⁴) *Zenbutsu* 486, March 2003:2.

religious traditions as the instrument to build the character of future generations of Japanese.

It is interesting to note that the aforementioned religious authoritative discourses found in the Japanese context can be framed in terms of reactions to the process of globalization. The expression “religious authoritative discourses” refers here to both the institutional view of a religious body, and to the peculiar kind of legitimation which distinguishes religious authority, namely, its reference to some supramundane component. In other words, the working definition of “religion” I employ here is “a social subsystem characterized by the fact that it legitimates its claims through the authority of some supernatural or superhuman agency, however weak.”¹⁵ This definition avoids any reference to the unsatisfactory connection between religion and the “ultimate meaning of life” while allowing the distinction between religion and other social subsystems.

One feature of globalization finds expression in secularization theory. In the present context the term “secularization” refers to “functional differentiation,” i.e., it is used descriptively to indicate that in modern society various subsystems (economy, science, politics, family, secular education, etc.) have gradually become more autonomous from religious claims and have organized around their own mediums, and their own values (Dobbelaere 2000). Technically oriented social subsystems, such as politics, economy, and science, are now dominant. The same argument can be extended to global society, where religion is challenged to relocate and restructure itself in relation to these technically oriented subsystems of communication. In this regard, it may be argued that secularization implies a loss of authority by religion over other social subsystems, although this does not necessarily imply the decline of religious institutions or individual religious consciousness.¹⁶

On another level, present-day globalization is characterized by the intensity, pervasiveness, and rapidity of the cultural and material exchanges that are taking place around the globe. This phenomenon carries within itself a dramatically increased potential for the relativiza-

¹⁵ Cf. Chaves (1994:754–757); and Martin (2000:143).

¹⁶ On this point, cf. Dobbelaere (2000); Beyer (2000); and Chaves (1994).

tion of cultural assumptions and religious values, inclusivity and hybridization which was already present in earlier stages of world history.

It should also be noted that this working hypothesis, far from being an optimistic and favorable understanding of globalization, does not imply any idealistic image of global harmony and progress. It is assumed here that globalization does not only involve “the crystallization and concretization of the world as a whole,” but also the exacerbation of “civilizational, societal, ethnic, communal and individual lifestyle differences” (Robertson 1991:283–284). In this connection, the present writer is also aware that the processes of cultural dissemination are selective and can assume the form of cultural imperialism. However, it is difficult to deny that globalization carries a potential for the relativization of *any* code of values.

If one considers the aforementioned examples, that is, the authoritative discourses of organizations such as the Japanese Association of Religious Organizations and the Japan Buddhist Federation related to the issue of the revision of the Fundamental Law of Education, it may be easily seen how they are positioned in terms of reactions to the process of globalization.

In terms of the aspect of “functional differentiation” related to globalization, it is apparent how both organizations are pressing for some degree of de-differentiation of the two subsystems, namely secular education and religion. In the case of the Japanese Association of Religious Organizations, the interference of religion in the educational system is justified on the basis of the superiority of religious communication, also termed “spiritual culture” (*seishin bunka*), over secular education in providing not only the foundations for spiritual life and care but also correct patterns of behavior, and concern and respect for others. If religion could exert once again its traditional “influence upon society” (as it actually did before the development of functional differentiation), it is maintained, pressing educational and social problems that are caused by “the dominance of economic efficiency and materialism” (that is to say, by the dominance of technically oriented social subsystems) would be solved (Nihon Shūkyō Renmei 2003). In this connection, the main difference between the positions of the Japanese Association of Religious Organizations and the Japan Buddhist Federation lies perhaps in the fact that the former is concerned about preserving at least formally

the differentiation of religion and education. This is mainly attempted through the aforementioned appeal for the promotion of the study of “religion as a cultural phenomenon” (*bunka to shite no shūkyō*) in public schools (Nihon Shūkyō Renmei 2003). In the case of the Japan Buddhist Federation this caution is lost. This may be seen in the stress placed on the necessity of inserting the “fostering of religious sentiment” (*shūkyōteki jōsō no kan'yō*) in the revised draft of the Fundamental Law. This interference of religion in secular education (that is, the de-differentiation of the two functional subsystems) is thus presented as the condition for the improvement of character-building of new generations of students and the solution of issues such as juvenile delinquency, class and family disruption, and other educational problems.¹⁷

Moreover, it is apparent that these reactions are also related to the second aspect of globalization, which concerns the relativization of cultural assumptions and religious values. That both the Japanese Association of Religious Organizations and the Japan Buddhist Federation may have a guarded attitude toward cultural relativization and pluralism, for example, emerges quite clearly not only from the former's emphasis on the “peculiar cultural traits of various countries” “within the process of globalization” (Nihon Shūkyō Renmei 2003) but also from the latter's explicit insistence on the primacy of Japanese religions in providing “moral education” (*dōtoku kyōiku*) in “an age of internationalization.”¹⁸

Shin Buddhist Authoritative Discourses from the Perspective of Globalization

As I have mentioned above, there has also been opposition to the revision process of the Fundamental Law of Education from within the Japan Buddhist Federation. In this regard, various critical views emerging especially from within Shin Buddhism have been presented above. A closer look at the claims of authority made by this religious denomination reveals how they are related to the dynamics of globalization. In this connection, I will focus on those reactions emerging at the official

¹⁷⁾ *Zenbutsu* 486, March 2003:2.

¹⁸⁾ *Zenbutsu* 486, March 2003:2.

level, notably from within the two major branches of Shin Buddhism, the Honganji-ha and the Ōtani-ha.

We have seen how authoritative discourses by both the Japanese Association of Religious Organizations and the Japan Buddhist Federation ground their claims of authority in the assumption that religious communication is superior to secular education as the instrument to build the character of future generations of students. In the case of the Japan Buddhist Federation it is made explicit that this role in public school should be played by Japanese religions. If we observe the position expressed by the Honganji-ha administration, it is possible to notice a shift in perspective, which despite “paying deep attention to religious education” (*shūkyō kyōiku no jūyōsei ni fukaku ryūi shi*) (Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha 2006a) maintains that:

... as concerns the revision of the ‘Fundamental Law of Education,’ the discussion is as yet far from exhausted, the proposal is rough-and-ready, and it is necessary to gather careful deliberations and reactions from a national debate beyond factionalism... (Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha 2006b)

This is to say that for the Honganji-ha, the authority of the political sphere alone is not enough to impose changes in the Fundamental Law. Moreover, it is also suggested here that this revision cannot be done without the concurrent efforts of all sectors of society (*zenkokumintekigiron*), thus implicitly acknowledging the equal status and authority of religious and other kinds of communication that are appropriate for other societal subsystems. Thus, from the perspective of globalization this position may also be interpreted as a defense, if very cautious, of the functional differentiation of subsystems in modern society. This may also be seen in the Honganji-ha’s concern that the revision of the Fundamental Law (which sanctions the separation of secular education, politics, and religion) may lead Japan to repeat the mistakes of its “unfortunate past” (*fukōna rekishi*) (Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha 2006a).

The implications of this kind of authoritative discourse, whose claims presuppose a positive approach toward the differentiation of the two areas of religion and education, are more explicit in the official statement issued by the Ōtani-ha (Shinshū Ōtani-ha 2004). With reference to the aforementioned report on the *Fundamental Law of Education and the Basic Promotional Plan for Education in a New Era* issued by the

Central Council for Education (Chūō Kyōiku Shingikai) in 2003, in the Ōtani-ha statement it is clearly affirmed that

... there is no sufficient discernment whether ‘the decline of self-confidence and public morality, atrocious crimes by juveniles, bullying, nonattendance and drop-out at school, classroom breakdown, etc.’ are caused by school education or society. The Fundamental Law of Education is arbitrarily deemed to be responsible for these problems, thus forcibly leading to its ‘revision’ which promotes and approves the state’s excessive intervention in the hearts of children and families. (Shinshū Ōtani-ha 2004)¹⁹

Therefore, such amendments as those promoting respect for Japanese tradition and culture, patriotism, and the restoration of moral education are but an instrument for the government’s interference in the educational sphere. These attempts are to be rejected, according to this document, because “the lives of the children are never for the state” (*kodomotachi wa kokka no tame ni sonzai suru mono dewa kesshite arimasen*), and because

Secular education is an activity that promotes and supports the self-formation of human beings as individuals, and cannot reduce itself to the planning and the imposition by the state of a definite image of the human being. (Shinshū Ōtani-ha 2004)

In this way, the Ōtani-ha grounds its authoritative discourse in the open defense of the autonomy of the educational subsystem, which is one aspect of the functional differentiation underlying the globalization process.

It should also be noted that this approach is also related to the values of the Japanese “peace” Constitution, and the process of internal rethinking of the role of Shin Buddhism during the imperialistic period and its war responsibilities.²⁰ These two points are of particular interest

¹⁹ Cf. Chūō Kyōiku Shingikai (2003).

²⁰ The Ōtani-ha first acknowledged its war responsibilities in 1987, on the occasion of the Memorial for the Victims of All Wars. In June 1995, the Ōtani-ha issued an anti-war resolution (*Fusen ketsugi*) expressing once again its regret for supporting Japanese imperialism, with a “vow to avoid war” aiming at “the realization of a peaceful world” (*heiwana kokusai shakai no kensetsu*) and a “love for one’s fellow companions within the four seas” (*shikai dōbō e no itsukushimi*). The Honganji-ha first acknowl-

for our discourse, because the acknowledgment that in the past the Ōtani-ha “forgot its duties as a community of Buddhist practitioners” (*Bukkyōsha to shite no honbun o wasure*) and “uncritically and actively cooperated with national policy” (*muhihan ni kokusaku ni sekkyokuteki ni kyōryoku shita*) (Shinshū Ōtani-ha 2004) points to another positive approach toward globalization, which is related to the relativization of cultural assumptions and religious values. This is the critical attitude toward tradition, the assumption of an “adaptive, cognitive style,” and the consequent espousal of the religious tradition as a “process of *learning to learn*” (Beyer 1994:144–145). That is to say, one’s own tradition is not deemed something to be defended at any cost, but can be subjected to criticism. Thus, it may be seen that the adoption of this cognitive-critical style provides further grounds for the claims of authority made by this influential branch of Shin Buddhism.

That the Ōtani-ha’s reaction to the revision of the Fundamental Law implies a positive approach to globalization may also be seen in the position of the Kyōiku Kihonhō ‘Kaisei’ ni Hantai Suru Kai, which has been mentioned above. In this connection, the following passage is particularly meaningful:

... there is a debate that tends to ascribe bullying, nonattendance at school, classroom breakdown, violence at school, and other causes of the decay of education to the Fundamental Law of Education. However, there have been no proper analyses and discussions relating to the location of the problems, there is a lack of a perspective from the point of view of the social sciences, and the argument is preposterous and too simplistic. (Kyōiku Kihonhō ‘Kaisei’ ni Hantai Suru Kai 2003)

Here lies a noticeable difference from the viewpoints expressed by the Japanese Association of Religious Organizations and the Japan Buddhist Federation. These two organizations ground their claims of authority in the assumption that religious communication has priority in secular education. Based on this premise, the former should provide the clue to solving pressing educational problems. Conversely, here it is

edged its war responsibilities in February 1991, in an official statement where reference was made to its own “collaboration in past wars.” In the text there is a call to the religious community to make “repentance” for its misdeeds and to advocate peace, according to Shinran’s teaching, “May there be peace in the world, and may the Buddha’s teaching spread” (*yo no naka an’on nare, buppō hiromare*). See Dessì (2007:147–148).

clearly indicated that the “analyses and discussions” of such problems relating to the educational sphere should be conducted from the standpoint of the social sciences, thus acknowledging the functional differentiation of religious and educational communication (cf. Tschannen 1991:402). Significantly, in the same document opposition to the revision of the Fundamental Law is also motivated on the grounds of the “dignity of life” (*inochi no songen*) which is a fundamental value for “Buddhist practitioners” (*Bukkyōto*). Thus, both the aspiration for peace²¹ — also appearing in the other statements by Shin Buddhist institutions that have been analyzed above — and the creation of a “society of fellows” (*dōbō shakai*),²² another central concept that is mentioned in the aforementioned issue of the *Shinshū bukkuretto shirizu* published by the Ōtani-ha in 2006, are used in contemporary Shin Buddhism at the institutional level as a justification to intervene in the issue of the Fundamental Law of Education. Indeed, this also may be interpreted as a positive approach to the push toward pluralism that the process of globalization itself implicitly promotes without being apparently able to fulfill it.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis of various authoritative religious discourses related to the revision of the Fundamental Law of Education shows significant differences between the perspectives of Shin Buddhism and

²¹) This concern is often expressed in contemporary Shin Buddhism by citing the aforementioned words of Shinran, “May there be peace in the world” (*yo no naka an'on nare*): see CWS I:560; and SSZ II:697. Of course, it may be objected that the reference to “peace” is common to nearly all the participants to the debate on the Fundamental Law of Education. However, it should be noted here that the rhetoric of peace is accompanied within Shin Buddhism by the concrete assumption of war responsibilities at the institutional level, a rethinking that is not to be found in most Japanese religious institutions. On this point and other articulations of Shin Buddhist pacifism, see Dessì (2007:51, 144–162).

²²) The concept of *dōbō* implies the equality of all *nenbutsu* practitioners in religious terms, and is grounded on the universality of Amida's Primal Vow, which through Shandao and Hōnen came to be understood in Shin Buddhism as including anyone “without a single exception.” For its meaning in contemporary Shin Buddhism, see Dessì (2007:38–61, 105–110).

other sections of the Japanese religious world, which imply a contrasting understanding of the functional differentiation and other core values underlying globalization. This is despite the fact that in Shin Buddhism's statements the interference of Buddhism in education is not thematized in itself. This is not to say that contemporary Shin Buddhism always positions itself in a positive way toward the dynamics of global society. As I have illustrated elsewhere, the critique of humanism and anthropocentrism also found in official documents reveals in Shin Buddhism a tendency to religious exclusivism and cultural chauvinism not dissimilar, for example, to other instances found within the Japan Buddhist Federation (Dessì 2006).²³

However, if one remains within the limits of the present discussion, it is apparent how in those authoritative discourses that are the expression of the Shin Buddhist institutional sphere, instead of insistence on the primacy of religious communication and "spiritual culture," one finds the acknowledgment that no revision of the Fundamental Law of Education can be implemented without the concurring efforts of all sectors of society. Instead of nostalgia for the dominant influence once played by religion upon society, one finds the acknowledgment of the autonomy of the educational subsystem with its particular mode of communication. Instead of the interference of religion in secular education as the condition for the improvement of character-building of new generations of students, one finds the conviction that this goal can be achieved only by protecting children from the intrusion of the state in education, and its manipulation of religious communication. And again, instead of the "fostering of religious sentiment," one finds the defense of the old draft of the Fundamental Law and its secular values based on the Japanese Constitution.

From the point of view of the development of the educational subsystem's functional differentiation, the issue of the Fundamental Law of Education shows a general tendency within the Japanese religious world to look back at earlier stages of Japanese history, when religion manifested itself as a framework of reference orientating the meaning of various spheres of social life. This framework was still at work in the

²³) It should also be noted, however, that in the Shin Buddhist context a similar positive attitude toward globalization can be traced in the relationship to other social subsystems: cf. Dessì (2007:191–208; 2009).

temple-school system (*terakoya*) of the Edo period, as is shown, for example, by the role played by Confucian and Buddhist moral teachings in the classroom despite a noticeable trend toward secularization. And it was also at work from the Meiji period onwards with the incorporation of State Shintō ideology in wartime textbooks, despite the creation of a centralized educational system that, from the point of view of functional differentiation, indeed increased the cohesiveness of educational communication as such. It was only with the enactment of the Fundamental Law of Education in 1947 that a clear distinction was made between the subsystems of education, religion, and politics. Against this background, the opposition of the Shin Buddhist institutions to the insertion of patriotism and more or less explicit religious elements in public education through the revision of the Fundamental Law of Education may be interpreted as a reaction to the attempt to weaken the boundaries between the differentiated areas of education, religion, and politics. In this regard, the authoritative discourses emerging from contemporary Shin Buddhism — which are also characterized by the adaptation of religious sources concerning equality and peace — show within the Japanese context an alternative pattern of interaction by the religious institutions with the dynamics of globalization, which does not necessarily understand the religious tradition as something to be asserted at any cost in spite of social change or against the claims of authority of other societal subsystems.

Abbreviations

- CWS I = Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha. 1997. *The Collected Works of Shinran*. Vol. I. Kyōto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha.
 SSZ II = Shinshū Shōgyō Zensho Hensanjo, ed. [1941] 2003. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho II* (Collected Shin Buddhist Scriptures. Vol. II), Kyōto: Ōyagi Kōbundō.

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Umbanda and Hybridity

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Abstract

Scholars of religion continue to talk of syncretism where their colleagues have moved on to talk of hybridity. This paper reviews critiques of the latter concept and argues that “hybridity” can be a useful concept, but only if further specified. I follow Peter Wade in distinguishing between *hybridity of origin* (the combination of pre-existing forms), and *hybridity of encounter* (the result of diasporic movements). I propose a third type, *hybridity of refraction*, in order to highlight the manner in which religious or cultural phenomena refract social tensions within a specific nation or society, resulting in a spectrum of ritual, doctrinal and/or religious forms. The typology is not meant to be complete or mutually exclusive: it suggests the value of adopting distinct, potentially overlapping, perspectives on hybridization. I illustrate the heuristic value of this approach with the case of Umbanda, a twentieth-century Brazilian religion.

Keywords

hybridity, syncretism, Umbanda, Candomblé, Kardecism, Brazil

The interdisciplinarity of Religious Studies is a source of both strengths and weaknesses. The field draws fruitfully on concepts and theories from other disciplines, but it tends to do so late in the game and often uncritically. For a generation now, scholars of post-colonial and cultural studies, literary criticism, intellectual history, communications, qualitative sociology and other fields have used and critiqued the concept of “hybridity.” Scholars of religion have covered some of the same ground in dealing with “syncretism,” but the newer term offers distinct advantages and raises fresh problems. Given that “hybridity” appears poised to play a more prominent role in the study of religion — as scholars in the field increasingly research diasporic religion, draw on post-colonial

theory, and so forth — this is an opportune moment to learn what lessons we can from the hybridity debates in other fields. “Hybridity” is valuable for four reasons: it reminds us that analyses of religious mixture must take into account broader cultural interactions, not just relations among those elements considered “religious”; it usefully highlights the prevalence, creativity and dynamism of cultural mixture, especially in our current global context; it reminds us that the study of contemporary religious phenomena requires attention to very specific historical, regional, and social contexts; and it reminds us to be wary of reifying or attaching normative weight to the boundaries that are crossed and blurred during cultural mixture.

In this paper, I first support the claim that scholars of religion continue to talk of syncretism where their colleagues have moved on to talk of hybridity. I then review a number of critiques of the latter concept. This results in some practical points regarding the critical use of “hybridity.” I then offer a brief overview of a specific case, Umbanda, a twentieth-century Brazilian religion. In analyzing this case I propose a threefold distinction between types of hybridity. This typology is proposed for its heuristic value, not because it is complete or mutually exclusive. I first draw on work by Peter Wade in order to distinguish two types of hybridity, which I rename *hybridity of origin* (the combination of two pre-existing forms), and *hybridity of encounter* (the result of diasporic movements). Based on my discussion of Umbanda, I argue that Wade’s distinction can be usefully complemented by the addition of a third type, *hybridity of refraction*. I suggest the latter in order to underline that certain cases of cultural mixture must be analyzed in terms of social tensions within a specific nation or culture.

My conclusion is that the concept of hybridity usefully draws our attention to an important set of issues, but that this contribution of the concept remains at a very general level. The real work of analysis comes down, as always, to careful work with cases. In this work, general concepts like syncretism and hybridity are of little value except as flags of allegiance to a certain approach.

Beyond “Syncretism”

Scholars of religion have continued to talk “syncretism” for an entire academic generation during which most of their colleagues, in other areas of the humanities and social sciences, have moved on to talk of “hybridity.” “Hybridity” came to prominence primarily in post-colonial theory, where, by a decade ago, it was “one of the most widely employed and disputed terms” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1998:118). The concept became influential in other fields, intersecting with a wide variety of related terms, both old and new: e.g., acculturation, articulation, bricolage, creolization, fusion, heterogeneity, in-betweenness, interstitiality, *mélange*, *mestizaje*, multiple identity, pastiche, polyphony, subalternity, third space, transculturation, etc. For better or for worse, Religious Studies has been curiously slow to jump on this terminological bandwagon.

A keyword search of research databases offers a useful measure of our field’s provincialism on this issue (see Table 1).

Table 1. Relative occurrence of hybridity terms (‘h’) and syncretism terms (‘s’) in keyword searches of four research databases: ATLA Religion with Serials; Francis; SocINDEX; and Academic Search Premier. Search performed 18/04/07.

	ATLA	Fran.	SocIN.	ASP
hybridity	19	137	525	762
hybrid	47	1143	1427	43154
hybridized	–	32	47	1867
Total ‘h’	66	1312	1999	45783
syncretism	1017	1084	178	288
syncretic	54	69	96	117
syncretistic	74	21	26	32
Total ‘s’	1145	1174	300	437
h/s	0.1	1.1	6.7	104.8
h/ h+s (%)	5.5	52.8	87.0	99.1

Comparing the relative number of occurrences of syncretism-terms with hybridity-terms makes it clear that scholars of religion are unusual in their preference for the former. In the ATLA Religion with Serials

database, heavily weighted toward Religious Studies publications, 5.5% of all references to either syncretism- or hybridity-terms were constituted by the latter. That is, publications in the database referred to syncretism seventeen times more often than they did to hybridity. In the Francis database, with solid but proportionately less Religious Studies representation, the numbers of occurrences were around equal. In SocINDEX, representing sociology with no weighting toward Religious Studies, “hybridity” references constituted 87% of the total. In Academic Search Premier, with its more general set of sources, 99.1% of the references were to “hybridity.” Clearly, scholars of religion prefer the s-word where their colleagues do not.

The situation in Religious Studies is beginning to change. An increasing number of papers are being published that frame issues in terms of hybridity. However, even apparent attempts to privilege the newer terminology effectively treat “syncretism” and “hybridity” as synonyms: a special issue of *Social Compass* framed by the editors as “Rethinking Religious Hybridity” (McGuire and Maduro 2005) included three papers on “hybridity” and two on “syncretism.”

There is, of course, a complex debate on the origin, history, allegiances, and value of the concept of syncretism (see Stewart 1999; Leopold and Jensen 2004; Martin and Leopold 2004). Many of the strengths and weaknesses of “syncretism” also apply in the case of “hybridity” (see Kraidy 2002; Hutnyk 2005). The most obvious criticism is that “syncretism essentializes too much, implying that there were once well-behaved pure breeds before the new religious mutts gnawed through their leashes” (Johnson 2002b:302). However, it is possible to draw a broadly useful distinction between the two concepts: *syncretism is a mixture of religious elements; hybridity is a broader mixture of cultural elements*. This is less a rigorous definition than a pointer in the direction of hybridity’s value as a more appropriate concept than syncretism for studying religion in an increasingly globalized age.

Syncretism is generally presented as a phenomenon internal to religion. Michael Pye defined it as “the temporary ambiguous coexistence of elements from diverse religious and other contexts within a coherent religious pattern” (1971:93). Charles Stewart offers “the broadest and most general definition of syncretism: the combination of elements from two or more different religious traditions within a specified frame”

(2004:282). Similarly, theorist of hybridity Nestor Garcia Canclini defines syncretism as “a combination of traditional religious practices” (Canclini 2006[2001]:xxviii).

Hybridity, on the other hand, more directly acknowledges the complex interactions between religions and their historical, political, social and cultural contexts. The distinction is not sharp; it points to two ends of a spectrum. Scholars of religion highlight religious elements in their analyses of hybrid forms, but, in general, a conceptual turn to “hybridity” highlights a broader range of cultural dimensions of religious change. In addition to focusing on cultural mixture more broadly, hybridity-talk emphasizes the normality, creativity, dynamism and political implications of such mixture. Ulf Hannerz for example, emphasizes the advantages of “a creolist point of view”:

It identifies diversity itself as a source of cultural vitality; it demands of us that we see complexity and fluidity as an intellectual challenge rather than as something to escape from. It should point us to ways of looking at systems of meaning which do not hide their connections with the facts of power and material life. (1987:556)

A turn toward “hybridity,” then, offers two immediate advantages for scholars of religion: it highlights religions’ complex relations to other dimensions of their cultures and societies; and it opens doors to existing cross-disciplinary discussions of these broader issues. Of course, “hybridity” is not without its own weaknesses.

Evaluating “Hybridity”

The shift from “mixture” as a phenomenon internal to religion to one that reflects religions’ complex interactions with their historical, political, social and cultural contexts is a valuable one. However, scholars of religion need not reinvent the wheel. Whether or not the actual term “hybridity” is deemed of value, scholars of religion should pay attention to the extensive debates over its strengths and weaknesses as they grapple with religions’ places in local and global contexts of cultural mixture. The concept of hybridity has its problems. Several critiques have emerged in fields outside Religious Studies.

First, it has biased roots. As Robert Young has shown, “hybridity” is rooted in the racially loaded discourse of nineteenth-century evolutionary theory (Young 1995; Stross 1999). This led late twentieth-century scholars to be wary of metaphorical language that draws on these roots: e.g., species, combination, crossing and grafting. This politically correct reflexivity among anthropologists and cultural theorists cast a shadow on an entire vocabulary, given the implicit valorization of pure parents over impure offspring. Paul Gilroy laments “the lack of a means of adequately describing, let alone theorizing, intermixture, fusion and syncretism without suggesting the existence of anterior ‘uncontaminated’ purities” (Gilroy 2000:250; cf. McGuire and Maduro 2005:411).

We can discount this first problem if we question the view that concepts with dark pasts necessarily have dark futures. The issues of a word’s origin may or may not be relevant to evaluating its current uses and functions. If we correct for biases of origin, there seems no need to throw out the concept. (For the same reason, there is no need to discard the concept of “religion” just because its use as a cross-cultural category has, in part, colonial origins.) Reflexive awareness of the normative dimensions of this focus on “pure” roots mollifies this first critique.

Scholars of religion are especially well positioned to adopt this reflexive stance. Writing in the context of Reformation history, Susan R. Boettcher suggests that, because scholars of religion “have no necessary ethical responsibility to take confessional sides,” [they] can use the concept of hybridity’s ability to blur the observer’s understanding of power relationships “to plumb the depths of the frequent ambiguities of religious, cultural and political power at work” (2005:450). On the one hand, we should not be too quick to assume that we are capable of some sort of “pure” objective, outsider stance. On the other hand, the study of religion has long had a very healthy debate over precisely these issues of reflexivity regarding the people and cultures that we study.

A second critique focuses on the descriptive dimension of this focus on “pure” roots, noting that such roots tend to be mixtures themselves.¹ Hybridity offers little analytical purchase, because it is hard to specify what is not hybrid: “All cultures are hybrid... Culture as an analytic concept is always hybrid... since it can be understood properly only as

¹) This section draws on parts of Engler 2006.

the historically negotiated creation of more or less coherent symbolic and social worlds” (Werbner 1997:15).

Scholars of religion are especially aware of this: Anita Leopold reminds us that “The history of religion confirms that every religion is in ‘essence’ syncretistic — there are no pristine origins or essences” (Leopold 2004:5). This again is only a problem if we imagine that our concepts must be absolute. There seems to be little difficulty if we use terms such as “syncretism” or “hybridity” in a relative sense, marking phenomena whose mixed nature is more prominent from a certain perspective, or in a contextual sense, using the terms as shorthand to highlight selected aspects of a given case. As Brian Stross puts it,

One might say that there are no truly ‘pure’ forms, ... completely homogeneous in composition (culturally) and perhaps never have been. Thus everything is a ‘hybrid’ of sorts. Yet the term has both utility and meaning for most of us. ... Pure in this context means relatively more homogeneous in character. ..., having less internal variation. Hybrid ... is of course more heterogeneous in character, having more internal variation. (1999:258)

However, these uses of hybridity terms are weak. It is trivially correct but hardly helpful to note that purity and hybridity are relative terms. This offers little analytical leverage beyond highlighting mixture as a topic of interest, leaving the important work to a closer consideration of what is mixed, how, to what degree, under what circumstances, and with what effects. If, as scholars of religion have long recognized, hybridity and syncretism are the norm rather than the exception, what needs explaining is why so much importance is placed on allegedly pure precedents and progenitors: “what is problematic is not hybridity but the fetishism of boundaries that has marked so much of history” (Nederveen Pieterse 2001:221); “Syncretism, acculturation, hybridity, and the creole are no longer the riddle to be solved. It is rather zones of religious purity and stability that now seem most worthy of curiosity” (Johnson 2002b:308).

A third critique of hybridity is that it overemphasizes diachronic differences, valuing historical origins/roots over hybrid actualities, or vice versa. This distinction has much in common with the distinction between “real” and invented traditions: both distinctions are misleading if overly sharp and especially when this descriptive distinction is

given a normative dimension, e.g., overemphasizing the static nature of the “old” and the self-serving tactical innovations of the “new” (Engler 2005a; 2005b). Ideological appeals to invented traditions can be smuggled in along with the celebration of hybridity: “in signifying the present, something comes to be repeated, relocated and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of a pastness that is not necessarily a faithful sign of historical memory but a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic” (Bhabha 1994: 35). Stuart Hall is more optimistic, “hybrids retain strong links to and identifications with the traditions and places of their ‘origin.’ But they are without the illusions of any return to the past” (Hall 1993: 363). Once again, the warning for scholars of religion tempted to work with the concept of hybridity is to pay explicit attention to the potential problems with the concept that scholars in other disciplines have already flagged.

Fourth, “hybridity” underemphasizes synchronic differences. According to John Hutnyk, the concept leads to a “flattening of difference [which] is secured at the very moment that celebrates difference and the creative productivity of new mixings” (Hutnyk 2005:96). On this view, “hybridity” draws attention to superficial distinctions while erasing more important ones: it “is inauthentic, without roots, for the elite only, does not reflect social realities on the ground. It is multiculturalism lite, highlights superficial confetti culture and glosses over deep cleavages that exist on the ground”; above all, “hybridity” assumes equality, hiding issues of power (Nederveen Pieterse 2001:221, 224).

Fifth, hybridity has become too glibly associated with a specific political agenda, sidestepping the detailed analyses needed to specify this relation more carefully. Hybridity is often celebrated precisely because hybridization is allegedly a politically significant process of resistance to, for example, the homogeneity of a global consumer culture: “Hybridity has today developed into a code word associated to a large extent with hegemonic politics” (Moreiras 1999:388). As John Hutnyk notes, it is often the case that “assertions of identity and difference are celebrated too quickly as resistance, in either the nostalgic form of ‘traditional survivals’ or mixed in a ‘new world of hybrid forms’” (Hutnyk 2005:80). Hutnyk’s ironic conclusion is that this allegedly political attention to hybridity fails precisely because its conception of

politics is overly superficial. Talking “hybrids” is not a way of being political but rather of avoiding doing so; it offers a nod and a wink that substitute for the difficult work of getting down to cases: “syncretism and hybridity are academic conceptual tools providing an alibi for lack of attention to politics” (Hutnyk 2005:92). These last two critiques, again, are more reminders to proceed with caution than reasons to abandon the concept.

Gilroy’s often-cited rant against “anterior purities” offers a useful summary of these issues, in part despite its explicit thrust:

Which culture is not... hybrid? The idea of ‘hybridity,’ of intermixture, presupposes two anterior purities... [T]here isn’t any purity; there isn’t any anterior purity... I try not to use the word ‘hybrid’, because there are degrees of it, and there are different mixes... Cultural production is not like mixing cocktails. What people call ‘hybridity’, I used to call ‘syncretism’... I would prefer to stick with that — syncretism is the norm, but, that dry anthropological word does not have any poetic charge to it. There isn’t any purity. Who the fuck wants purity? Where purity is called for, I get suspicious. (Gilroy 1994:54–5)

Ironically, Gilroy’s simile of the cocktail doesn’t do what it is meant to do, but its failure sheds unintentional light on several dimensions of hybridity. Gilroy says, “Cultural production is not like mixing cocktails,” but this simile fails spectacularly: the bottles on the shelf above a cocktail bar themselves contain mixtures. In cocktail mixing as well, there are no anterior purities: in that sense cultural production *is* like mixing cocktails. A Manhattan, for example, is made from Canadian rye whiskey, Italian or French sweet vermouth, and Trinidadian/Tobagan or Venezuelan Angostura bitters, garnished with Maraschino cherries. And, of course, these ingredients themselves are mixtures: for example, the cherries are made by soaking them in Maraschino, a liqueur, invented by sixteenth-century Dominican monks in Zadar, Croatia, which is fermented from Italian, Croatian or Slovenian Marasca cherries, selected herbs, and tropical cane syrup. The difference is not one of origin or nature but of perceptions or framing. Bottled cocktail ingredients are packaged, branded, and marketed as *distinct and unitary* products; cocktails are marketed as *mixtures* of these. Both commodities gain in value due to the perceived naturalness or legitimacy of the distinction between unitary originals and hybrid product. Where

everything is a mixture, the question becomes when and why certain mixtures are presented or perceived as pure.

Distilling Gilroy's cocktail simile draws attention to four characteristics of hybridity that serve to summarize a set of issues that scholars of religion need to pay attention to:

- The contrast between unitary originals and hybrid product is, to an important extent, a construct. The distinction between pure and unadulterated is a relative one.
- Asserting the pure/impure contrast is a common tactic, but only one of many, for projecting normative force on this artificial boundary.
- This boundary is often constructed in terms of a diachronic dimension, with further normative force drawing on the distinction between tradition (long-established ingredients) and innovation (new mixture).
- Once this boundary has been legitimized, reified or naturalized, eliding it can have further ideological effects.

This forces us to clarify exactly what relative and contextualized leverage we seek to gain by using "hybridity" or other terms to point to mixtures. Unless we problematize the concept adequately, talking about hybridity is just as vague and unhelpful as much talk of syncretism has been in the field of Religious Studies. The concept is only useful if grounded:

Hybridity becomes a floating signifier ripe for appropriation, precisely because we use the concept without rigorous theoretical grounding. . . . [A] nongrounded use of hybridity is detrimental to theorizing. . . . because it encourages superficial uses of the concept. Such uses will tend to be descriptive rather than analytical, utilitarian rather than critical. (Kraidy 2002:323)

Talk of hybridity too often simply points at difference; two further steps are required. First, we need to pay more attention to a close analysis of specific cases, examining the specific social, material and ideological contexts where these processes work themselves out. Second, we must go beyond the basic work of describing hybrid forms to ground the concept more firmly in theory. With greater attention to the specific

details of what is mixed under what circumstances and with what recourse to discourses of purity, the concept can offer useful analytical leverage. The following section offers a brief overview of Umbanda, highlighting those characteristics that will be drawn upon in the final analytical section.

The Spectrum of Umbandas

Umbanda is a distinctively Brazilian religion that reflects the course of urbanization in modern Brazil (Ortiz 1975:89; 1999[1978]:214). It formed in the 1920s and 1930s as a self-conscious mixture of two traditions that are themselves mixtures: Candomblé, an Afro-Brazilian tradition that evolved as various West African beliefs and practices encountered early-modern Iberian Catholicism in the context of a colonial slavery system; and Kardecist Spiritism, a rationalized French version of American Spiritualism, with strong mesmerist and Christian influences.² Two other religious influences were also important: Catholicism, primarily indirectly through both Kardecism and Candomblé but also with some direct influences; and indigenous traditions, not directly but through the imagined and romanticized figure of the *caboclo* (Concone 2001), but also (perhaps more directly) in possession by the spirits of animals in some northeastern groups (Toop 1972:73). Arthur Ramos, in a classic study, noted that “in Brazil, there are no longer pure African cults, in terms of their origin” and pointed to seven distinct degrees of mixture, “in order of increasing syncretism,” including Yoruba and Bantu variants as well as Islamic, “caboclo,” Kardecist and

²) On Candomblé see Carneiro 1977[1948], Bastide 1960, Prandi 1991, Johnson 2002a, Harding 2005 and Silva 2005[1994]. On Kardecism see Kloppenburg 1964, Bastide 1967, Warren 1968, Camargo 1973, Aubrée and Laplantine 1990, Hess 1991, and Negrão 2005[1987]. On Umbanda see Montero 1985, Brown and Bick 1987, Brumana and Martinez 1989, Brown 1994[1986], Negrão 1996, and Ortiz 1999 [1978]. On Neo-Pentecostalism and its ritual focus (in exorcism) on these same spirits and *orixás* see Birman 1997, Campos 1999[1997], Mariano 1999, and Oro 2007. I use the word “tradition” to point to the dynamic tension between strategies of legitimation and authority offered by “authentic” and “invented” traditions (Engler 2005a; 2005b). All translations from Portuguese and French are mine.

Catholic elements (2001[1934]:138). Umbanda, the most recent major religious innovation to draw on Afro-Brazilian roots, incorporates a broad spectrum of these influences. In this context, Ortiz argues that Umbanda has moved past syncretism to synthesis: “If ‘candomblé’ and ‘macumba’ are African religions, the spiritism of Umbanda is, on the contrary, a — I would say *the* — national religion of Brazil” (1975:96; original emphasis). Further clarification of Umbanda’s hybridity is clearly in order. A fruitful place to begin is by noting that it is a hybrid of hybrids, and one that reflects the social and historical context of its emergence: “Umbanda is a religion of a new model of society, as Kardecism was previously” (Prandi 1991:62; see Fry 1982).

These religions are relatively small. In the 2000 census, 2.2 million Brazilians self-identified as Kardecists and 397,000 as Umbandists. Candomblé, the largest of the Afro-Brazilian traditions, is much smaller, with only 118,000 Brazilians claiming this as their primary religious affiliation (Jacob et al. 2003:101–105). More nuanced analyses report slightly higher numbers (Pierucci and Prandi 2000). Due to the fact that Umbanda is seen as a provider of physical and spiritual healing services, a much larger number of Brazilians participate regularly in the rituals of Umbanda, though they do not consider themselves members of the religion.³

The two main “roots” of Umbanda are quite distinct from each other. Especially significant in the emergence of Umbanda are factors of race and class in the mixture of these anterior impurities. Candomblé, one of a wide range of Afro-Brazilian religions, places fundamental emphasis on the possession of initiated members by *orixás* (divinities originating primarily in various West African cultures and, at times, associated with Christian saints). *Terreiros* (grounds) are organized as a *família-de-santo* under the leadership of the *pai-de-santo*, or less commonly *mãe-de-santo* (saint father/mother). Key rituals include the *roda-de-santo* (saint wheel) in which initiated members dance counter-clockwise, to intensely syncopated drumming, until they enter into a trance state, becoming *cavalos* (horses) for the *orixás*, as well as initiation and divination. Candomblé has received especially intense academic scrutiny and,

³) For an exemplary study of the appeal of Afro-Brazilian religions’ healing functions, resulting in multiple adherence among Catholics, see Oro 1989.

arguably, the influential studies of Edison Carneiro and Roger Bastide went beyond making this one among many Afro-Brazilian religion well known: “Bastide did not limit himself to studying Candomblé. He contributed greatly to its invention” (Motta 1996:32; see Despland 2008).

There are a number of differences between Candomblé and Umbanda (see Silva 2005[1994]:126–127): e.g., Umbanda has a larger and more doctrinally elaborated set of supernatural entities; it places more emphasis on mediumship as a source of service to clients; it places less emphasis on divination, and less emphasis on the *pai-de-santo* as central to ritual (often foregoing that term and role entirely); it places less or no emphasis on initiation, with the charismatic authority of mediumship playing a greater role than the ranking of initiation and period of study in its institutional hierarchy; it maintains a greater role for sorcery (though less than the closely related religion Quimbanda); its texts and hymns make less use of African vocabulary and, at the “white” end of the spectrum of rituals forms, uses Christian elements (e.g., the “Our Father”). These differences are sufficient that, as Véronique Boyer suggests, “Candomblé and Umbanda form poles, tendencies that organize the religious universe with opposing and irreconcilable currents” (1996:18).

Kardecism presents itself as science, philosophy and religion. Its beliefs include the possibility of communication with disembodied spirits, reincarnation, karma, the universal spiritual perfection of humankind, “obsession” caused by the interference of non-evolved spirits, a plurality of inhabited worlds, a transcendent God, and Jesus Christ as an exceptionally evolved spirit. Key rituals include consultation with or reception of messages from spirits received by mediums, the *passe* (a form of blessing similar to New Age cleansing of the aura) and study sessions.

The origin of Umbanda and its ongoing social location are closely tied to issues of race and class. Three tendencies, reflecting the Brazilian “myth of three races” (indigenous, black and white [DaMatta 1987:58–85]) — were present in the formation of Umbanda. First, Spiritists looked to Afro-Brazilian traditions for a more intensely emotional and corporeally satisfying symbolism and ritual, leading to the *emprete-cimento* (blackening) of Kardecism (Ortiz 1999[1978]:40–45):

[Umbanda's founders] came to prefer the African and indigenous spirits and divinities present in 'Macumba,' considering them more competent than the highly evolved kardecist spirits in terms of the cure and treatment of a wide range of diseases and other problems. They found the rituals of 'Macumba' much more stimulating and dramatic than those of Kardecism, which seemed by comparison static and insipid. (Brown 1985:11)

A second tendency was the late nineteenth-century *embranquecimento* (whitening) of Candomblé and other Afro-Brazilian traditions, due to two factors, primarily in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo: the presence of increasing numbers of white members, often new immigrants; and the formation of a "low Spiritism" among the lower classes (Camargo 1961:34–35; Ortiz 1999[1978]:4–40). Edison Carneiro's study of Afro-Brazilian religions in Bahia in the 1930s, for example, found Spiritist ideas being absorbed into *candomblé de caboclo*, a tradition already incorporating both African and indigenous elements: "it is notable that some of these cults have reduced themselves to the so-called *baixo espiritismo* ('low-spiritualism')" (Carneiro 1940:276, original emphasis; cf. Leacock 1964a; Ortiz 1999[1978]:36). The appropriation of kardecist elements was an important factor in this aspect of Umbanda's emergence: "'Cleaning up' the new religion of those elements most compromised by a secret and sacrificial initiation tradition was to take Kardecism as a model, one capable of expressing the ideas and values of the new republican society..." (Prandi 1991:49).

The third factor involved the other of Brazil's three races. In the 1920s, a number of kardecist mediums began to receive the spirits of Brazilian Indians. The presence of these *caboclos* was rejected by mainstream Spiritism as impure and incompatible with universal human spiritual progress. (The term "*caboclo*," often used by outsiders to characterize residents of Amazonia, conveys racial mixture, but has negative connotations of rural backwardness and simplicity [Pace 1997].) In the years since, some Kardecists have been open to rapprochement with Umbanda, but a firm rejection has been more prominent; a statement from the Kardecist press is typical: "Any confusion between Spiritism and primitive forms of mediumship [or] manifestations of religious syncretism... are nothing more than a miscomprehension of Spiritist Doctrine and cannot be incorporated" (cited in Kloppenburg 1964: 55–57). The presence of *caboclos* — who function as spirits of nature,

in structural opposition to the domestic spirits of *pretos-velhos* and children — continues to be a central characteristic of Umbanda (Concone 2001; Motta de Oliveira 2007). Their absence is a defining characteristic of Kardecism. *Caboclos* have been an element of some Afro-Brazilian traditions since the early twentieth century, especially Catimbó, Jurema, and Batuque (Boyer 1992; J.T. Santos 1992; Harding 2005:122; Prandi 2005:121–138).

These symmetrical tendencies can be interpreted in opposing ways. On the one hand, it is possible to portray the formation of Umbanda as one of harmonious mediation of tensions in Brazilian society. A recent introduction to Afro-Brazilian religions suggests that Umbanda's "development was marked by the search, initiated by white segments of the urban middle-class, for a model of religion that could legitimately integrate the contributions of the groups composing the national society" (Silva 2005[1994]:15). On the other hand, these developments, especially the *embranquecimento* of Candomblé, were racist: "pioneering umbandists were anxious to situate the origins of Umbanda within the respectability of the world's great mystic traditions, and they envisioned their mission to be that of saving Umbanda from the negative influences associated with its African past, and of purifying it of its African practices" (Brown 1977:33). On the other hand, the racism that was a dominant factor in the emergence of Umbanda, the rejection of the spirits of departed black and indigenous people as unevolved, was inverted to some extent by the centrality of these spirits in Umbanda. According to an Umbanda practitioner's guide,

The *pretos-velhos* and *caboclos*... were rejected, due to many [Kardecist] leaders' lack of comprehension. Some mediums disagreed with this discrimination, because the disembodied spirits that present themselves as '*pretos-velhos*' are, for the most part, highly evolved spirits, on a mission of charity. (Pinto and Freitas 1972:29)

The fact that certain racialized doctrinal and ritual tensions led to the formation of a new religion in large part reflects the fact that the social sphere where Umbanda originated straddled racial and class boundaries: black/white; and lower-class/middle-class. This is not to suggest that there exist sharp and rigid boundaries between these groups in Brazil — racial and social distinctions are blurred — though the

extremes of the spectra exhibit dramatic differences in economic and political power as well as in cultural status and capital. Rather, the diffusion of religious ideas and the adherence of new types of members led to a broader than usual mix of co-religionists. It is important to keep in mind that race in Brazil is a complex issue, with tensions less sharply defined than in other areas of Latin America [Lovell and Wood 1998; Hoffman and Centeno 2003; Fischer 2004]. As a result, even explicit talk of race sometimes masks, e.g., talk of class, and vice versa. One aspect of this complexity, and of Umbanda's reflecting social tensions, lies in the emergence of a new critical voice among the *preto velho* spirits in some (but certainly not all) *terreiros*, spirits that have radically shifted from wise house-slaves to incisive critics of racial, gender and other inequalities in Brazil (Hale 1997).

Given its historical development, Umbanda highlights several tensions in Brazilian society. This manifests itself in tensions internal to Umbanda itself. There is a spectrum between the "white" Umbanda, closer to Kardecism, and the popular Umbanda closer to Candomblé (Birman 1983:80–94). The particular set of constitutive elements in a given Umbanda *terreiro* varies along a spectrum ranged between kardecist and Afro-Brazilian extremes: "There is not *one Umbanda* but *many Umbandas*, with a great diversity in beliefs and rituals" (Motta 2006 [1999]:25; original emphasis). With relatively few institutionally imposed or maintained norms, individual Umbanda *terreiros* continue to manifest this spectrum of doctrinal and ritual characteristics, from Kardecist-like to Candomblé-like. The former is, to a greater extent, a middle-class phenomenon and the latter includes a greater proportion of lower-class members. (Bastide's early assertion [1960; 1967], later qualified [1974], that Umbanda was primarily and uniformly a lower-class religion has been soundly rejected [Ortiz 1999{1978}; Negrão 1979; Brown 1994{1986}].)

This spectrum is also correlated, to some extent, with racial variation: Umbanda *branca* is "white" not only because it places more explicit emphasis on white magic. This spectrum is in turn correlated with different manners of foregrounding the issue of origins. White Umbanda tends to downplay Afro-Brazilian ritual form, though it preserves the *pretos-velhos* and sees Umbanda's internal fragmentation as degenerate. The point is not that Umbanda is race-blind, though this is asserted by

umbandists: “Umbanda does not discriminate against blacks, has no prejudices, neither of class nor colour” (Matta e Silva 2004 [1969]:33). Rather, it manifests a spectrum of beliefs and practices that reflects the social spectra of race and class in Brazil.

It is worth underlining this point in order to avoid a misreading. People of all classes and races participate in Candomblé and Kardecism as well, but there is not the same spectrum of intra-religious phenomena varying in correlation with racial and socio-economic factors. It is not that *candomblecistas* are poor and black and *kardecistas* affluent and white, with *umbandistas* occupying a spectrum of demographically-determined positions in between. Census data paint a much more nuanced picture (Jacob et al. 2003; 2006). However, the variables of (i) doctrinal elaboration, ritual form and institutional structures and (ii) race and socio-economic status track each other to a much greater extent in the case of Umbanda.

The spectrum of Umbanda also varies in terms of its attitudes toward sexuality. An important similarity between Umbanda, primarily at the Afro end of its spectrum, and Candomblé is their offering scope for the performance of alternative sexualities in a society governed by very conservative heterosexual gender roles (Landes 1947; Fry 1982; Birman 1985; 1995; Natividade and Oliveira 2007).

Umbanda has always manifested strong tensions between fragmenting and centralizing tendencies: tensions between variation of doctrine and practice depending on individual *terreiros* and the development of associations that have both emphasized doctrinal regularity, in order to make public claims that Umbanda is a “religion,” and to lobby for religious freedom in face of government oppression through most of mid-20th century. The centralizing tendencies attempted to impose a hierarchical structure and tended to emphasize the *embranquecimento* of Umbanda:

The first attempt to create a religious hierarchy for the various umbandists occurred in 1937. It was accompanied by an ideological emphasis on the *embranquecimento* of worship forms of African origin. The Spiritist Union of Umbanda in Brazil... proposed a religion stripped of African symbols that, at the same time, placed value on a Gospel-based doctrinal orientation. (Birman 1983:95)

Umbanda is also intermediary in terms of its range of institutional manifestations of internal divergence. Kardecism exhibits a high degree of uniformity, with some tensions between “religious” and “scientific” camps. Doctrine and practices are relatively explicit, with slight divergence between centres associated with different federations. Distinctions between the various Afro-Brazilian religions reflect historical and geographical differences (above all, differences, historical and constructed, between cultural groups of slaves). These various traditions manifest complex interrelations in terms of origins, beliefs and rituals, and they are generally associated with distinct regions: e.g., Batuque in Rio Grande do Sul; Cabula (historically) in Espírito Santo; Candomblé de Caboclo and Jurê in Bahia; Catimbó, Cura and Pajelança from Pernambuco through Amazônia; Canjerê in Minas Gerais; Macumba in Rio de Janeiro; Toré in Sergipe; Tambor de Mata [or Terecô] in Maranhão; Tambor de Mina in Maranhão and Pará; Babassuê in Pará; Xambá in Alagoas, Pernambuco and Paraíba; Xangô and Jurema in Pernambuco; and, of course, Candomblé in Bahia, later spreading to Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul. (Umbanda’s relation to Candomblé reflects its origins in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.) The Afro-Brazilian religions manifest relatively little institutionalization, with each *terreiro* being largely independent. Umbanda occupies a middle ground, with intellectuals and federations arguing sharp lines at the “white” kardecist end of the spectrum and with Umbanda blurring into Afro-Brazilian traditions, with an emphasis on charismatic leadership within individual *terreiros*, at the other end of the spectrum. This institutional variation is also reflected in increased potential for internal struggles between those who emphasize traditional ritual skills and those who manifest organization and intellectual skills, a tension analyzed by Yvonne Maggie as one between “the code of the *santo*” and “the bureaucratic code” (2001 [1977]).

Kardecism draws sharper boundaries than Afro-Brazilian traditions, with Umbanda in between with respect to this characteristic. At the white end of the umbandist spectrum, Umbanda has appropriated elements of Kardecism, but the reverse is not the case. At the Afro end of the spectrum, there is mutual admixture between Umbanda and Afro-Brazilian traditions, e.g., in “umbandized” Xangô and the strong presence of elements of Jurema in umbandist *terreiros* in the interior of

Brazil's northeast (Motta 2006[1999]:27–30; Assunção 2001). The blurring of the Afro extreme of the Umbanda spectrum into Candomblé and other Afro-Brazilian traditions is illustrated, for example, by Leacock's fieldwork in the 1960s, which discovered quite flexible insider labels: "Members do not call the cult 'Batuque,' but refer to it as either 'Nagô,' 'Mina,' or 'Umbanda,' depending on minor variations in belief and ritual" (1964b:354 n.2). Similarly, many senior practitioners of Afro-Brazilian traditions in Minas Gerais distinguish between Umbanda and Canjerê while emphasizing their fundamental continuity (Tavares and Floriano 2003:167–168).⁴ The greater fluidity of boundaries at the Afro end of the Umbanda spectrum is also illustrated by the extent to which that sub-set of Umbandas has been "re-africanized" by Candomblé since the latter's growth in the urban centres of southeastern Brazil since the 1960s (Prandi 1991:74; 2000:644).

Umbanda is also intermediary in terms of the extent to which it is drawn upon by New Religious Movements, which are largely associated with middle- and upper-class urban religiosity. Kardecism has an historical relation to Mesmerism, and it manifested significant tensions in the late nineteenth century between scientific and esoteric tendencies (Monroe 2008). In Brazil, these characteristics inform its marked tendency to serve as an important element in a range of NRMs: e.g., *Círculo Esotérico da Comunhão do Pensamento* (1909), *Ordem Mística Espiritualista Agla-Avid* (1959), *Ordem Espiritualista Cristã/Vale do Amanhecer* (1969) and others (often with esoteric or Masonic influences). The "white" end of the Umbanda spectrum expresses this same tendency, though to a much lesser extent: it informs Umbandaime (an emerging current within Santo Daimé); and several groups have adopted the label of Esoteric Umbanda (Guerriero 2006). Afro-Brazilian traditions have little presence in Brazilian NRMs.

⁴ An example from my own fieldwork illustrates another dimension of these fluid boundaries. Informants took me to what they called a "Candomblé" in a small city in Minas Gerais. It was, in fact, a *terreiro* of Umbanda at the Afro end of its spectrum. This reflects the prominence of white Umbanda in their own experience of that religion and their primary concern with therapeutic services rather than insider or academic categories. Of course, this experience leads me to interrogate the "in fact" of my own categorizations.

The spectrum of Umbanda's ritual variants also reflects divergent processes of secularization and rationalization in Brazilian society. The spectrum between kardecist and Afro-Brazilian extremes of Umbanda represents varying degrees of rationalization of Afro-Brazilian traditions, or, according to Renato Ortiz, "levels of secularization" that allow us to study how "traditional magico-religious practices . . . cross class boundaries, penetrating both lower- and middle-classes" (1999[1978]:214; see Motta 2006[1999]:24). A prevalence of scientific metaphors (especially electro-magnetic terms) at the white end of the spectrum reflects the admixture of "scientific" and "philosophical" kardecist doctrines (reflected also in the themes of spiritual evolution/perfection and moralization of worldly activity) (Camargo 1961:115–117; Ortiz 1999[1978]:168–173).

These various characteristics of Umbanda all stand as variables along which the religion manifests a spectrum of religious, especially ritual, forms that are correlated with broader tensions in Brazilian society. In a classic study, Candido Procópio Ferreira de Camargo argued that Umbanda and Kardecism form extremes of a continuum of Brazilian religious practices of mediumship (1961). This is misleading, as Umbanda varies widely from ritual forms like Kardecism to those like Candomblé, where Kardecism itself varies relatively little. Renato Ortiz has suggested the more defensible idea of "a religious gradient between two poles: the more westernized and the less westernized" (1999:97). Ortiz superposes two distinctions in suggesting "westernization" as the criterion of the spectrum of ritual Brazilian spirit-possession religions: traditional/modern and African/European. This is helpful, but it both begs the important question of invented traditions and does not go far enough in clarifying the complex negotiations of race and culture in the Brazilian landscape. Moreover, it fails to capture a crucial element: the relation between these religious dimensions and the social context.

Three Types of Hybridity

Discussions of hybridity usefully highlight issues of race, class, and power, though the above problems warn us to be critical in our use of the concept. An effective typology of hybridities should take account of different sorts of crossings of different boundaries in different contexts, and it should distinguish scholarly from insider perceptions of hybridity.

In this light, Peter Wade proposes a useful distinction between two types of hybridity:

The first, which as a shorthand I will call roots-hybridity, depends on a simple syncretism of two anterior wholes to make a third new whole. In this teleological mode, roots and belonging are paramount and exclusive essentialisms can easily be reproduced. The second, which I will label routes-hybridity, depends on unpredictable diasporic movements, creating unstable complex networks, not reducible to teleological progressions, but moving to and fro erratically in time and space. In this mode, routes and movement are paramount and exclusivism gives way to more inclusive identities based, for example, on perception of common interests and goals, rather than common origins. (Wade 2005:256–257)

On the one hand, roots-hybridity is the outdated essentialist view of syncretism, where recent theorists of hybridity see routes-hybridity “in some sense as a progression from or challenge to the former, if not as its simple opposite” (2005:257). On the other hand, Wade makes two points that suggest the continued value of this distinction: “thinking in terms of roots and origins is not necessarily as essential and exclusivist as it might first seem”; and “the routes form of hybridity cannot escape from the roots form. The two are mutually implicated and co-dependent” (2005:257). That is, in addition to being cautious in our scholarly use of these concepts, we need to recognize that the distinction points to something significant in insider perceptions of hybridity. Because Wade’s visually catchy labels, “roots” and “routes,” are homophones, I propose alternative terms: hybridities of “origin” and “encounter.”

Several elements of analytic caution are crucial. First, the distinction between hybridities of origin and encounter does not presume that the roots of the former are pure nor that the parties that encounter in the latter are hybrid. Second, the distinction is not that between past and present, tradition and innovation: origins can be current developments and encounter historical ones; both scholarly “facts” and insider “inventions” are relevant to both. (In this light, Wade’s emphasis on teleology is misleading, as it characterizes “roots-hybridity” from the critical perspective that he tries to move past.)

The distinction frames distinct perspectives, issues and sets of questions not distinct hybrid realities. “Hybridity of origin” marks (i) insider perceptions of the origin and character of distinct cultural forms, whether seen in essential and exclusivist terms or not, and (ii) limited

scholarly attention to the “internal history” of doctrine, practice and institutional forms (including that of current developments). The scholar or insider’s choice to invoke this type of hybridity highlights the general issues of origins but leaves many complex questions open. For example, focusing on insider accounts of roots, Candomblé is an African religion, but the extent to which this origin is constructed, invented or imagined remains debated among scholars. Kardecism presents itself as largely independent of place, though its European roots are often associated with past and present status claims, and some works argue that its origin is (mythically) Brazilian. Umbandist texts, again manifesting a spectrum, sometimes point to roots in Africa, sometimes to India, Brazil, Atlantis, or other planets, and sometimes claim a universality free of geographic roots.

“Hybridity of encounter” marks the social context of cultural interaction, the strategies and tactics of mutual influence, and the agency of participants. Both concepts are appropriate for talking of historical or contemporary developments. Both are useful for analyzing diasporic religions as well as the more constrained interactions of long-term coexistence within a given cultural context. (For example, Umbanda’s emergence is not a diasporic mixing but a development internal to a well-established, albeit eminently hybrid and post-colonial, society: the encounter here is not that of diaspora but of urbanization.) As analytical tools, the two concepts are complementary. Hybridity of origin is not the self-conscious construct of novelty, a movement toward an end, but a reaction to specific historical, religious, and often political circumstances. It reflects the present as much as the past. Similarly, hybridity of encounter necessarily draws on its roots. It reflects the past as much as the present. Discussions of hybridity are useful when they foreground the struggles that draw, label, prioritize, naturalize, and sacralize boundaries; they are misleading when they take these boundaries and the significance of their crossing or blurring for granted.

Analyzing Umbanda in terms of Wade’s two concepts of hybridity would miss one of the religion’s defining characteristics. To draw this out, I propose a third type of hybridity: that of “refraction.” Umbanda consists in a spectrum of individual groups that span the same racial and class divisions that sparked its emergence in the early twentieth century. It is not a diasporic religion (hybridity of encounter). It did

indeed originate in the mixture of distinct religious roots, themselves hybrids (hybridity of origin). But to stop here would leave out a crucial dimension of the religion's hybridity: the way that it continues to manifest internally a series of tensions that were implicated in its hybrid roots and that continue to be constitutive of Brazilian society. The concept of hybridity of refraction refers to this way in which the social boundaries that are symbolically elided, inverted, or echoed within a system of religious beliefs and practices reflect or refract homologous boundaries present in a given society.

Umbanda is a modern religion that spans, symbolically elides, yet ultimately reinforces important social boundaries in Brazilian society. It is an especially important case of the hybridity of refraction because its origin, trajectory, and status are so intimately tied with issues of race and class in Brazil and because it reflects these tensions in its doctrinal elaboration, ritual form, and institutionalization. Various scholars have noted the marked extent to which Umbanda reflects Brazilian society. Peter Fry argues that Umbanda reflects the social and political structures of Brazilian society (1982). Concone notes that the religion's various spirits "are obviously drawn from the national reality.... This is precisely the most interesting aspect of the umbandist religion: the fact that it dives so deeply into Brazilian reality, ... transforming popular figures into symbols..." (2001:282). (The symbolic work of Umbanda is a particularly dynamic aspect of its flexibility and mutability [Malandrino 2006].) Brumana and Martinez, in their invaluable study, analyze Umbanda as a "subaltern cult" that "elaborates symbolically the social condition of the client" (1989:45). Ortiz argues that "umbandist ideology preserves and transforms Afro-Brazilian cultural elements within a modern society, [while, at the same time] manifesting rupture, forgetting, and reinterpretation of older, traditional values" (1999 [1978]:212). Patricia Birman underlines Umbanda's symbolic and ritual engagement with Brazilian social reality:

Possession in Candomblé involves the state and audience in scenes that are more perfect the more they involve criteria irreducible to the civilized world — a world of alterity is recognized by this criterion, valorizing the Africanness that it presents. On the other hand, umbandist possession ... is worthy of credit to the extent that it contextually invokes its relation with the world as experienced by its audience. (1995:44–45)

What I add to this frequent recognition that Umbanda is especially responsive to the structures and tensions of Brazilian society is a more precise characterization of this responsiveness: this is not a relation between a uniform or generic type of Umbanda and Brazilian society; it is a relation between distinct variants of Umbanda and specific social tensions. That is, Umbanda manifests the hybridity of refraction.

Umbandist doctrine and ritual manifest both the positive and negative aspects of Brazil's myth of harmonious *mestiçagem* between three races: it celebrates a certain form of racial inclusiveness, yet without challenging racism's material manifestations; and it does so within traditional hierarchical and largely patriarchal social forms. It also reflects a range of class positions, marked by geographical location of the *terreiros* within communities, by middle-class participation, and by varying degrees of intellectualization, emphasis on texts, and the prominence of semi-conscious rather than unconscious trance states. The spectrum of types of Umbanda, from kardecist to Afro-Brazilian, with their different stances regarding the religion's origin and fragmented nature, manifests this same ambiguity both eliding and reflecting social boundaries.

Umbanda is not unique in manifesting the hybridity of refraction. Kardecism manifests more elite and popular variants. Bastide distinguished between upper, middle and lower-class Spiritism; significantly, he defined the latter as "another type of spiritism, the spiritism of Umbanda," noting that "one finds between Kardecism and Umbanda a whole series of transitions" (1967:9, 11). Candomblé also manifests the hybridity of refraction, albeit to a lesser degree than Umbanda. In the late twentieth century, Candomblé underwent what Paul Christopher Johnson calls a "social extension", moving from "traditional" to "public" forms, in part as a result of the increasing prominence of Afro-Brazilian elements in popular culture: "the religion that was ethnically specific is presented as universally available" (2002b:313; see 2002a). Inseparable from this development are a series of recent movements within Afro-Brazilian traditions that aim at reclaiming the purity of perceived tradition through processes of "re-africanization," "de-syncretization," "de-catholicization" etc. (Caroso and Bacelar 1999). If this were a recent development, this would be the hybridity of encounter, not of refraction. However, a tension between traditional/African *terreiros* and those more open to a broader social

spectrum has been prominent in Candomblé since at least the late nineteenth century (Harding 2000; Parés 2007:132–138). This tension was amplified in the late twentieth century by immigration from the northeast to the large urban centers in the south (Prandi 1991; 2005). To a limited extent, then, Candomblé — less than Umbanda but much more than other Afro-Brazilian traditions — spans, in its limited ritual, doctrinal, and institutional variants, important social boundaries in Brazilian society: i.e., ethnic and racial distinctions with some correlated variation in class adherence.

The three types of hybridity that I have distinguished — those of origin, encounter, and refraction — are not mutually exclusive but represent different perspectives or emphases, as is illustrated by the parallel between Candomblé and Umbanda. Both religions began in a context of religious mixture (hybridity of origin); both resulted from and reacted to the interaction of different religious and cultural currents, primarily diaspora and urbanization respectively (hybridity of encounter); and both have internal variations that reflect constitutive social tensions in their national context (hybridity of refraction). My claims are that Umbanda is distinct in terms of the degree of importance of the latter factor, and that the concept of hybridity of refraction helps to highlight some of the most important features of this new Brazilian religion.

A fuller analysis would take account of three important dimensions of Umbanda that manifest not a spectrum of positions between Afro-Brazilian traditions and Kardecism but distinct alternatives. First, Umbanda creates a space where ambiguous moral agency is prized: it demonstrates “the legitimacy of the rogue, the underhanded and the personal favour [*do malandro, da sacanagem e do favor*]” (Fry 1982: 13; see Concone 2001:284–286). The power that mediumship gives in Umbanda is more ambivalent, capable of being used for good or bad ends: it is little constrained by an explicit moral system, as in Kardecism, or by the subsumption of individual agency through identification with the possessing supernatural entity, as in Candomblé (Brumana and Martinez 1989:40–42). Second, Umbanda “positions itself as a religion that encourages social mobility, ... [and] this mobility is open to all, without exception” (Prandi 1991:58).⁵ Third, Umbanda reflects, more explicitly than most manifestations of Brazilian religiosity, the centrality

⁵ I argue elsewhere that specific characteristics of umbandist ritual function to orient

of patriarchal patron-client relations. The mediums are possessed by helpful spirits who act as patrons to their clients, many of whom return week after week to speak to the same *caboclo* or *preto-velho*. The *pai-de-santo* in an Umbanda *terreiro* is “the center of a network of distribution where magical services are exchanged for money with wealthy clients, celebrations are exchanged for recognition by the general public and the *filhos-de-santo* and money invested in the *terreiro* become symbols of success” (Fry 1982:75).

Conclusion

This paper has argued that Umbanda manifests a spectrum of beliefs, rituals and institutional forms that is correlated with broader tensions in Brazilian society, above all race and class. Umbanda is not unique in this sense but (i) it is characterized by a particularly significant degree of this intra-religious variation, (ii) it is intermediate between Kardecism and Afro-Brazilian traditions in an especially wide variety of senses, and (iii) that these characteristics are uniquely implicated in Umbanda’s origin. Again, it is not that Kardecism is white and upper-class, Candomblé black and lower-class, and Umbanda in the middle. All races and classes are involved in all three religions. Rather, variations in these social tensions are mapped onto variations in belief, practice, and institutionalization to a much greater extent in the case of Umbanda: the many Umbandas of Brazil are an especially clear case of the hybridity of refraction.

Reviewing the literature underlines the fact that the processes of mixing that concepts like “syncretism” and “hybridity” point to are complex: varying, for example, from internal elision of ideal-typical boundaries between religions to complex influences among diverse cultural forms in pluralistic, diasporic communities. Discussions of different forms of mixture rightly draw attention to the reorganization of social spaces in the face of modernization, globalization and diaspora, issues that the study of religion must address. But these concepts tend

the agency of participants in a manner consistent with this social mobility (Engler 2007; 2008; 2009).

to take boundaries too much for granted in the attempt to theorize their crossing and elision. They are useful when they foreground the ideological forces that draw, label, prioritize, naturalize, and sacralize boundaries; they are misleading when they reify those boundaries.

The typology of hybridities proposed here offers one tool to help focus on specifics. The distinction between *hybridity of origin* and *hybridity of encounter* draws our attention to distinct modes of analysis: the former concept highlights characteristics of hybrid forms as permutations and combinations of other forms, and the second underlines the social context of the mixing process. The third type that I propose here, *hybridity of refraction*, highlights one relation between these two dimensions of analysis: the extent to which *variations* among religious or cultural phenomena reflect social tensions within a specific nation or culture.

Brazilian culture offers a useful case for rethinking religion's relation to race, class, syncretism and hybridity, given its rich religious landscape and complex history of racial and cultural mixing. More specifically, Umbanda contains within itself a spectrum of beliefs and practices that refract tensions of race and class in Brazil, and this is not the case, to anything like the same extent, with Afro-Brazilian traditions or Kardecism. Umbanda's *variation* reflects social tensions in Brazilian society, and it is this that justifies the term "hybridity of refraction."

In its origins and beliefs, Umbanda incorporates key racial and class tensions prominent in Brazil, levelling or inverting elements that are hierarchically arranged in the broader society. DaMatta suggests that the *mestiçagem* present in Umbanda reveals yet displaces the hierarchical relations present in Brazilian society: "Umbanda and Carnaval . . . , along with their cousin, *futebol*, foster powerful ties of brotherhood, uniting the powerless by virtue of their magical and mystical powers" (1983[1987]:137). Umbanda reframes social tensions in part by offering a symbolic resolution of their tensions in a manner distanced from material effects. However, this is not an illusory or merely compensatory relation. Umbanda allow millions of Brazilians to rehearse modes of ritual agency that both reflect and reframe the constraints that they experience in their society (Engler 2007; 2008; 2009). Its effectiveness in doing so is, in part, a function of the fact that its spectrum of ritual forms reflects the broader set of constraints that impact practitioners' experience as social agents.

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Book Reviews

Sonship and Jewish Mysticism. By BEN MOSHE IDEL, The Kogod Library of Judaic Studies, 5. London-New York: Continuum, 2007. XI + 725 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8264-9666-9.

Selon S. Freud, le judaïsme serait une religion du père et le christianisme une religion du fils. C'est cette affirmation quelque peu sommaire que vient corriger l'ouvrage volumineux de l'A., consacré à la figure du fils dans la littérature rabbinique, essentiellement mystique, de l'Antiquité jusqu'à l'époque contemporaine. La différence entre christianisme et judaïsme se fait plutôt à l'intérieur de la notion de fils de Dieu: le premier affirmant le caractère unique de ce fils, le second privilégiant une conception plus démocratique de la filiation divine. D'autres facteurs contribuent à différencier la conception juive de la filiation, comme l'absence d'une théologie très structurée, le rapport direct entretenu avec la langue hébraïque ou encore l'importance des préoccupations théurgiques. On peut distinguer quatre modèles pour rendre compte de la filiation dans la mystique juive, ceux de la génération, de l'émanation, de l'adoption et de la vocation. Les deux premiers sont de nature théophanique alors que les deux suivants s'accompagnent plutôt d'une dynamique ascensionnelle. La filiation peut également être double quand une entité intermédiaire est à la fois en position de fils par rapport à Dieu et en position de père par rapport aux hommes. C'est le cas par exemple du Logos de Philon. Pour traiter de la ressemblance entre le fils et le père, l'A. propose aussi une approche conceptuelle nouvelle, celle du morphonominalisme. Le fils de Dieu ressemble à son père, par sa forme corporelle, sans qu'on puisse pour autant parler d'incarnation. Il lui ressemble aussi par le nom qu'il porte, ce nom étant quelque chose de véritablement substantiel. Le morphonominalisme, qui dérive vraisemblablement d'une lecture d'Ex 23, 20–24, est perceptible dans le livre d'Hénoch, à Qumran ou encore dans la gnose valentinienne. Il est une clef de lecture majeure des corpus auquel l'A. consacre son effort d'analyse.

Sur la notion de fils, il existe un véritable dialogue entre la littérature talmudique et le corpus mystique des Palais (*Hekhalot*), mais c'est un dialogue tronqué, tout particulièrement sur la figure double d'Hénoch/Métatron. Le Tétragramme mentionné en Ex 24, 1 («Monte vers l'Eternel») désigne, selon

le Talmud, Métatron lui-même, dont le nom «est comme le nom de son maître». Métatron est donc l'ange de la révélation, auprès de qui Moïse va chercher la Tora. Il est aussi le partenaire de Dieu dans la création. La littérature des *Hekhalot* insiste sur une autre facette du personnage: c'est Hénoch, après sa montée au ciel, qui se transforme en Métatron. Cette transformation peut être qualifiée de morphonominale. Hénoch/Métatron devient un véritable «fils de Dieu», même si ce titre ne lui est jamais donné explicitement et ce, en dépit des notions de jeunesse, de partenariat ou encore d'engendrement qui peuvent lui être associées. Le Talmud, sans le dire explicitement, envisage même une démocratisation du statut morphonominal de Métatron, étendu à tous les justes, dans le monde futur et peut-être dès à présent. Si l'on excepte la figure d'Hénoch/Métatron, la notion de fils de Dieu apparaît de manière beaucoup plus sporadique chez les rabbins de l'Antiquité. Elle est notamment appliquée à Rabbi Ḥanina, en tant que juste, fondement du monde, ou à Rabbi Yishma'el de manière plus théurgique.

Les matériaux sur Hénoch, Métatron et Yaho'el sont particulièrement abondants dans la littérature ashkénaze médiévale. Il est probable qu'une partie de ces matériaux remontent à la période antique. Selon des sources variées (musulmanes, karaïtes mais aussi rabbanites), Métatron aurait même fait l'objet d'un culte dans certains cercles juifs. L'A. a surtout mis l'accent sur un ouvrage relativement négligé et qui existe en plusieurs versions manuscrites: le commentaire de Rabbi Neḥemya ben Shelomo le Prophète sur les soixante-dix Noms de Métatron (fin XII^{ème}–début XIII^{ème} siècles). Par un jeu complexe de *gematriyyot*, Rabbi Neḥemya met en relation le nom «fils», dont la valeur chiffrée est cinquante-deux, avec Elie (niveau humain), Métatron/Yaho'el (niveau angélique) et Dieu lui-même, avec le double Tétragramme ou encore l'expression «et mon Dieu». Il sous-entend ainsi l'existence d'une échelle dynamique des filiations, dont il est possible de franchir les étapes. La mention d'Elie, qui donne une tonalité messianique au texte, à côté de Yaho'el, rappelle le couple d'Elie et du Petit Iao dans le traité gnostique *Pistis Sophia*. Les écrits d'Eleazar de Worms ou du Pseudo-Eléazar, proches par certains côtés des préoccupations de Rabbi Neḥemya, se singularisent cependant par leur intérêt pour la figure d'Adam et pour le motif des cinquante-deux portes de l'intelligence. L'image (*selem*) partagée entre Dieu et son fils n'est autre que le Nom divin lui-même, considéré comme une sorte d'âme, semblable à celle qui anime le corps du *golem*. Chez plusieurs kabbalistes du XIII^{ème} siècle, proches de la pensée de Rabbi Eleazar, le fils aîné (*bekhor*) peut devenir un chérubin (*kerub*), par la connaissance et la prononciation des lettres du Tétragramme.

Les traditions mystiques ashkénazes, à caractère linguistique, dont nous venons de parler, ont constitué l'une des sources d'inspiration du kabbaliste

extatique Abraham Abulafia (1240–1291 ou 1292), avec le *Livre de la formation* (*sefer yešira*) et la philosophie aristotélécienne, telle que la présente Maïmonide dans son *Guide des Perplexes*. Comme chez Philon, la notion de « fils de Dieu » prend un caractère exclusivement spirituel et se déploie à deux niveaux (double filiation). Le fils de Dieu est d'abord Métatron, identifié à l'intellect agent mais aussi à l'Israël d'en-haut et au Messie. Il est ensuite le mystique, à qui Métatron apporte le salut, en faisant passer son intellect de la puissance à l'acte. À terme, le mystique peut devenir un « homme divin » (*ish elohi*). Interlocuteur de Yaho'el (comme Abraham dans l'*Apocalypse d'Abraham*) et recevant l'onction (comme Hénoch dans *II Hénoch*), Abulafia est convaincu d'être le Messie. En dépit de l'échec de cette prétention, la conception abulafienne du fils se retrouve dans le *Livre de la combinaison* (*Sefer ha-šeruf*), dans les écrits d'un certain nombre de philosophes ainsi que dans la pensée du kabbaliste Rabbi Nathan ben Sa'adya Ḥarar. Chez ce dernier, Rébecca correspond à l'âme humaine et Jacob à l'intellect qui, fécondé par « l'esprit saint » (c'est-à-dire l'intellect agent), acquiert le statut de fils.

Abraham Abulafia n'appartient cependant pas au courant dominant de la kabbale médiévale et moderne, marqué par deux aspects fondamentaux : la théosophie et la théurgie et un objet de spéculation principal : les *sefirot*. L'une des *sefirot* est en position de fils : Beauté (*Tif'eret*). Isaac l'Aveugle insiste sur le rapport qu'elle entretient avec sa mère, Intelligence (*Bina*), Naḥmanide sur le rapport sexué qui l'unit à sa sœur, Royauté (*Malkhut*) ou Présence divine (*Shekhina*). Contrairement à ce qui est le cas dans la perspective chrétienne, le fils est intégré dans une structure familiale complète (père/mère/fils/fille), elle-même insérée dans la structure plus vaste des *sefirot*. Les premiers écrits de la kabbale théosophique-théurgique laissent peu de place à la figure du fils, si l'on excepte le *Bahir*, qui emploie même le terme au pluriel : les « fils » désignent le peuple d'Israël ou les sept *sefirot* inférieures, les juifs devenant alors les « petits-fils ». Le caractère sexué du fils entraîne le caractère sexué de la fille c'est-à-dire de la *Shekhina*, sans que cela suppose une influence de la gnose ou de la figure de la Vierge Marie. Dans le *Zohar*, l'homme juif est adopté successivement par *Malkhut* puis *Tif'eret* qui se retrouvent en position de père et mère. À côté de cette imagerie familiale dominante, on trouve aussi celle des deux Faces, la Grande Face étant conçue comme le Père de la Petite. Entre le *Zohar* et la kabbale lurianique, un grand nombre d'auteurs viennent enrichir la thématique de la filiation. Pour Joseph de Hamadan, le Messie est issu de la copulation entre Dieu et sa concubine, identifiée à Métatron. Le *Livre de celui qui répond* (*Sefer ha-meshib*) reprend une vue chrétienne pour mieux l'inverser : la copulation par la voie orale entre la *sefra* Fondement (*Yesod*), qui inclut en elle Israël et les Nations et la « vierge » *Malkhut*, engendre les deux Messies. Moshe Cordovero fait de Rabbi Ḥanina, celui que Dieu appelle « mon fils »

dans le Talmud, un canal qui puise les influx de l'en-haut afin de les redistribuer dans notre monde. La kabbale d'Isaac Luria (1534–1572) accorde une place considérable à la figure (*parṣuf*) de la Petite Face, qui connaît une évolution cyclique, faite d'une phase d'ascension et d'une phase de descente. Le retour régulier de la Petite Face dans le sein de sa mère n'a pas de caractère sexué mais il constitue un moment de danger pour ses fils humains (Israël). Son union avec la femelle (*nugbeh*) a en revanche un caractère sexuel et constitue les « eaux » qui permettent la sexualité des figures du Père et de la Mère. La kabbale lurianique a fourni le cadre qui a permis de penser la messianité de Shabbatay Şewi, associé à la Petite Face mais sans contrepartie féminine et connaissant une ascension dans le domaine des *sefirot*. Le théologien sabbatéen et ancien *converso* Abraham Miguel Cardozo s'oppose aux utilisations de la trinité chrétienne par certains membres de son camp, pour justifier la messianité de Shabbatay Şewi. Selon lui, ces erreurs ne sont pas loin d'avoir leurs racines dans la kabbale elle-même. Cardozo donne aussi sa propre compréhension de la filiation divine, avec l'idée d'une âme des *sefirot*, qu'il qualifie du terme de « fils ».

Dans l'Italie de la Renaissance, sous l'influence de plusieurs corpus de textes, de nouvelles conceptions du fils de Dieu apparaissent chez des penseurs chrétiens mais aussi juifs. Pic de la Mirandole fait usage de matériaux kabbalistiques et identifie Jésus à des *sefirot* perçues comme filiales (la Sagesse, *Hokhma* ou *Tif'eret*). Le « fils de Dieu », dont parlent les hermétiques, les zoroastriens et les juifs, est le premier ange créé et il ne doit pas être confondu avec le « fils de Dieu » de la théologie chrétienne. Il est probable que Pic de la Mirandole critique ici la position de son contemporain, le philosophe platonicien Marsile Ficin. Pour celui-ci, le fils de Dieu est l'intellect divin qui émerge de Dieu, le Bien suprême. Du côté juif, le fils est conçu dans le cadre d'une théologie à dominante cosmique. Ainsi, chez Léon l'Hébreu, le monde créé est tout entier le fils de deux entités supérieures, la beauté et la sagesse. Rabbi 'Azarya de Rossi est le premier auteur juif à connaître à la fois Philon et la littérature hermétique, ce qui lui permet de constater la similitude de leurs conceptions respectives du fils. L'ensemble de ces spéculations, chrétiennes comme juives, ont eu une influence considérable sur la kabbale chrétienne ultérieure, avec la *Kabbala Denudata* de Knorr von Rosenroth ou encore l'œuvre de Moses ben Aharon de Krakow, juif sabbatéen devenu chrétien, qui identifie Jésus à Métatron. Les kabbalistes chrétiens ont exercé à leur tour et exercent toujours une influence non négligeable sur les chercheurs contemporains qui se consacrent à l'étude de la mystique juive et de la kabbale.

Le corpus juif dans lequel la notion de fils occupe la place la plus prépondérante est celui du Hasidisme. Celui-ci reprend à Moshe Cordovero la figure talmudique de Rabbi Ḥanina, « fils de Dieu », identifiée à l'échelle de Jacob.

Cependant, l'échelle ne représente plus l'enchaînement des *sefirot* mais la personne du juste lui-même, qui peut élever les autres et les sauver. Il n'est pas sûr pour autant qu'il faille faire de Rabbi Ḥanina une figure charismatique, comme le pensait Martin Buber. Dans une parabole attribuée au Ba'al Shem Ṭob et dont l'A. confirme l'authenticité, celle du fils du roi, le juste traverse une phase de descente qui précède et même rend possible son ascension ultérieure. Cette chute n'est qu'apparente, mais le juste n'en prend conscience qu'au terme de son parcours. La même parabole montre comment la prière parvient à monter, en détruisant les forces qui empêchent son ascension. Certaines versions de la parabole insistent sur la valeur de la souffrance pour atteindre le plus haut rang spirituel, d'autres minorent celle-ci ou estiment que l'homme de l'élite suit une autre voie. La Grand Maggid, certainement critique à l'égard de la parabole du Ba'al Shem Ṭob, propose une autre parabole, plus simple, où la création est présentée comme un don fait au juste et où Dieu s'adapte aux limitations de son fils (le juste), en limitant son propre intellect. Certaines traditions ḥasidiques sur le fils sont en apparence influencées par le christianisme. Le Rab Shneursohn affirme, par exemple, que celui qui consomme le pain sans levain (*maṣa*) consomme en fait l'essence de la divinité. Il est cependant probable que ces ressemblances sont à mettre sur le compte du néo-platonisme, qui irrigue en profondeur et à son propre insu, la pensée ḥasidique elle-même. L'importance de la notion de fils dans le ḥasidisme, au point de se concrétiser dans la succession des *rebbe* de père en fils, exprime un véritable désir de filiation divine, conçu la plupart du temps comme ouvert à tout Israël.

Sur la longue durée, la figure du fils de Dieu connaît donc une ascension remarquable dans le judaïsme : plutôt discrète dans la littérature talmudique, elle s'affirme à l'époque médiévale et moderne, pour devenir dominante dans la littérature ḥasidique. Il serait bien téméraire, selon l'A., d'expliquer cette ascension par l'influence en retour du christianisme sur le judaïsme. Les auteurs juifs qui valorisent la notion de filiation sont parfois les plus hostiles au christianisme. Il faut au contraire privilégier une pluralité de modèles et se méfier de toutes les catégories trop rigides (religion, mystique, magie, philosophie...) qui ne rendent pas compte de la complexité des phénomènes culturels observés. Comme le dit un texte de la *Pesiqta Rabbati*, placé en épigraphe : « Quiconque possède mon *mysterion* est mon fils. » Il reste à appliquer cette sentence à l'A., qui a bel et bien percé, dans une large mesure, le mystère de la filiation mystique dans le judaïsme.

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Ernst Troeltsch: Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Herausgegeben von FRIEDRICH WILHELM GRAF, CHRISTIAN ALBRECHT, VOLKER DREHSEN, GANGOLF HÜBINGER; Trutz Rendtorff. De Gruyter, Berlin; New York 1998 ff [KGA].

Vol. 2: *Rezensionen und Kritiken 1894–1900*. Herausgegeben von FRIEDRICH WILHELM GRAF in Zusammenarbeit mit DINA BRANDT. 2007. xx, 925 pp.

Vol. 16: *Der Historismus und seine Probleme* [1922]. Herausgegeben von FRIEDRICH WILHELM GRAF in Zusammenarbeit mit MATTHIAS SCHLOSSBERGER. 2008. In two volumes: xx, 1422 pp. ISBN 978-3-11-016342-1.

Vol. 17: *Fünf Vorträge zu Religion und Geschichtsphilosophie für England und Schottland*. Herausgegeben von GANGOLF HÜBINGER in Zusammenarbeit mit ANDREAS TERWEY. xvi, 266 pp.

Vol. 16 and 17 (of the KGA) contain the last of his works, before Ernst Troeltsch — unexpectedly, 57 years old — died on 1st of February 1923. The obituaries called the massive (777 pages in its original edition) *Der Historismus und seine Probleme* a fragment in the quality of a monument (“Monumental-fragment”) and “his scientific legacy”; it was planned as the first of two volumes. The aim of the only partly completed monument is condensed in a series of lectures, Troeltsch was invited to deliver before great scientific audiences in England and Scotland at London, Oxford and Edinburgh: invited as the first eminent German scholar, four years after World War I. Troeltsch was introduced as the speaker of the liberal Protestantism by Friedrich (Baron) von Hügel, a famous Catholic theologian in England with sympathy to (but not accused of) modernism, i.e. liberal Catholicism. But Troeltsch died, before he could travel and read his papers. A German original text of the five papers *Der Historismus und seine Überwindung* (KGA 17, 67–132) was translated by Hügel and was published in 1923 as *Christian Thought. Its History and Application* (KGA 17, 133–203). The last short comprehensive series of lectures is recurring to the great works of Ernst Troeltsch and thus forms a condensation of problems, Ernst Troeltsch tackled during his whole life “The subject contains the centre and starting point of my academic career, first set forth in my little book on *the Absolute Validity of Christianity*” (KGA 17, 134): (1) his diagnosis of the modern world as crisis, (2) Christianity as the most modern religion, because she is able to develop along with modern society (Ernst Troeltsch thought of [Dutch] English and American reformed Protestantism, not of German Lutheranism). (3) The relativity of values raised by historical development which stands in conflict with absolute values as the eternal values

of religions. Christianity is outstanding among the other religions (most interesting the Oxford lecture “Christianity among World-Religions” (KGA 17, 134–148; 105–118). As early as in the first great book *Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religionsgeschichte* (1901; KGA 5) Ernst Troeltsch thought that only in Christianity historical development and absolute value met and developed together.

Already in his early reviews, now assembled in Vol. 2 of KGA, Ernst Troeltsch reviewed the books of his time in 46 reviews und three great Forschungsberichte on philosophy, anthropology and theology, altogether ca. 1300 articles und books. The bibliography lists this heap of works according to the state of the art nowadays, nearly every German book published in these fields during that time, many English and some French books. The diagnosis in these reviews is recurring: Theology fell into a deep crisis. The fundamental authority up to now can not stand any more: the Holy scripture as a historical monument (“Wunderapologetik” KGA 17, 110 — defending miracles). The historical method of historism and its problems Ernst Troeltsch already detected in earlier reviews (1898 KGA 2, 428–447. 1899 KGA 2, 592.616 (see also the excellent explanation of the context by Otto Gerhard Oexle in: *Troeltsch-Studien* 11, 2000, ed. F.W. Graf, pp. 23–64). But now, it seems to him, that the whole scientific world-view representing the society’s value-builder fell into the same crisis, the crisis of historism.

After the great War the crisis emerged even more. As the healing power Ernst Troeltsch appraises — instead of the differences between the national values fighting in a cultural war — a European cultural synthesis (Europäische Kultursynthese KGA 16) under the leading values of the English and American culture. A new political ethic is needed in Germany, liberal, Ernst Troeltsch was (besides his professorship at the university) state secretary for research and education in the democratic post-war “Weimar” Republic. According to him the German politics had to be changed according to the Western cultural values. The aim of History is a World history of the Europeans (“Weltgeschichte des Europäertums” KGA 16, 1025) as the — up to now — most developed form of mankind. This is far more than Max Weber’s “okzidentale Sonderentwicklung”.

Again the volumes are excellently edited, the introductions are providing every detail pertaining to the works. Some are recurring, but there are some lacking, e.g. The ‘Mauriner’ are mentioned as the first historico-critical school, but there is no explanation about the convent of St. Maur founding modern historical methods (KGA 16, 170). Indeed it provides more detailed or corrected information, bibliographies, biogramms, indices: best standards for a critical edition.

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Religioni in contatto nel Mediterraneo antico. Modalità di diffusione e processi d'interferenza. Atti del 3° colloquio su "le religioni orientali nel mondo greco e romano", Lovenno di Menaggio (Como) 26–28 Maggio 2006. By CORINNE BONNET, SERGIO RIBICHINI, DIRK STEURNAGEL (éd.), coll. Mediterranea. Quaderni annuali dell'istituto di studi sulle civiltà italiche e del Mediterraneo antico del Consiglio delle ricerche, 4, 2007, Pisa, Roma, Fabrizio Serra editore, 2008. ISBN 1827–0506.

Le projet de recherche conçu par Corinne Bonnet sur les « religions orientales » a débouché sur trois ateliers de coopération scientifique entre la France (représentée par Corinne Bonnet elle-même), l'Allemagne (représentée par Jörg Rüpke) et l'Italie (représentée par Paolo Scarpi). A ce travail scientifique ont participé des savants des trois pays cités ainsi que d'autres spécialistes européens. Leur but était de faire le point sur le concept de « religions orientales » dans l'Empire romain cent ans après la parution de l'œuvre de Franz Cumont.¹ Lors des rencontres entre les chercheurs, tous les critères sur lesquels l'idée de « religions orientales » a été construite ont été remis en question.

A la fin de leur première rencontre, les savants sont arrivés à la conclusion que les termes « religions orientales » ne désignent pas une catégorie de cultes qui se différencient substantiellement des autres de la Méditerranée antique.² Durant leur deuxième rencontre, ils se sont interrogés sur différents aspects découlant du concept de « religions orientales » comme celui, très ambigu, de « cultes à mystère », mais aussi de message théologique véhiculé par les images des ces cultes dits « orientaux » ou encore des agents de transmission de ces cultes.³

Dans l'élégant volume publié par Bonnet, Ribichini et Steurnagel que je présente ici, les interventions de la troisième rencontre, qui a eu lieu à la villa Vigoni (Menaggio) en Italie en 2006 sont éditées. Le projet s'est terminé sur un colloque international qui a eu lieu à Rome en novembre 2006.⁴

¹) Franz Cumont, *Les religions orientales dans l'Empire romain*, édité par Corinne Bonnet et Françoise Van Haepelen, Aragno, Milano, 2006 (première édition 1929).

²) Les résultats de cette rencontre sont parus dans un volume de la revue *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 8 (2006).

³) Le volume édité par Corinne Bonnet, Jörg Rüpke, Paolo Scarpi, *Religions orientales, culti misterici, Mysterien: Nouvelles perspectives – nuove prospettive – neue Perspektiven*. Franz-Steiner-Verlag, Stuttgart, pp. 113–122, 2006 a réuni les résultats plus significatifs.

⁴) Colloque international *Les religions orientales dans le monde grec et romain; cent ans après Cumont (1906–2006). Bilan historique et historiographique*, Academia Belgica et Musées Capitolins, 15–18 novembre, 2006.

Ce livre présentant la troisième rencontre se compose d'une introduction, qui explique la place de cette étude dans l'ensemble du projet, et de trois parties. Une conclusion n'a pas été prévue, mais le dernier article, écrit par Ch. Auffarth, peut être considéré comme tel.

La première partie est présentée par Jörg Rüpke et porte sur « les parcours et la diffusion des cultes ». J. Rüpke met l'accent sur le fait que les signes religieux qu'on peut détecter dans l'Antiquité n'indiquent pas toujours la présence d'un groupe ayant une identité reconnaissable et une religion organisée et séparée des autres. Les découvertes du sanctuaire d'Anna Perenna à Rome et de la Mère des dieux à Mainz avec la présence de tablettes d'envoûtement montrent clairement l'existence d'un mélange des pratiques religieuses officielles et privées.

Cette première partie se compose de cinq articles:

1. E. Sanzi présente une réflexion sur le passage d'Apulée concernant le culte d'Isis et d'autres documents qui attestent les mêmes pratiques religieuses. Il montre comment ce texte d'Apulée a contribué à diffuser le culte d'Isis.
2. L. Bricault analyse les différents cas de la fondation d'un sanctuaire pour Isis. Il s'agit de migrants qui le fondent loin de leur domicile d'origine par initiative privée. Le spectre des possibilités est varié. Il comprend aussi le cas où le fondateur, qui n'est pas toujours un dévot, fait construire le sanctuaire pour s'attirer la faveur d'un souverain.
3. V. Gasparini reprend le dossier des sanctuaires italiques d'Isis qui ne font toujours pas l'objet d'une publication exhaustive. Il se concentre sur les sanctuaires à Rome, mais aussi en territoire italique et étrusque. Il prend en compte des données nouvelles comme celles qui se dégagent des récentes découvertes de Populonia où il y a un sanctuaire qui pourrait être attribué à Isis.
4. A.-K. Rieger a rédigé un très riche article sur le rapport entre le caractère local et suprarégional du culte de la Mère des dieux.
5. D. Stuernagel s'occupe de la communication entre l'intérieur et l'extérieur d'une ville et étudie en particulier les ports comme lieux d'arrivée d'idées nouvelles. Il conclut que ces cultes « orientaux » n'arrivent pas d'ailleurs tels quels, mais qu'uniquement certains éléments étrangers vont se greffer sur des structures romaines préexistantes.

La deuxième partie du livre, composée de cinq articles, se concentre sur le rapport entre paganisme, judaïsme et christianisme en lien à la conception de « cultes orientaux ».

Comme il a été annoncé dans la partie introductive rédigée par N. Belayche et E. Rebillard, le but est de discuter des cultes « orientaux » par rapport au concept de « pluralisme religieux ». Selon l'analyse de Cumont, les religions orientales représentent une avancée vers le christianisme. L'émotivité qu'elles suscitaient était proche de l'élévation éprouvée par les chrétiens vers leur dieu. Mais cette vision ne tient pas compte d'autres facteurs tels que l'importance du culte juif dans le panorama religieux de l'Empire ainsi que le manque d'exclusivisme propre à ce type de culte. Les auteurs rappellent le cas de Vettius Agorius Praetextatus qui était prêtre de Vesta, du Soleil, augure, taurobolié, initiés aux mystères de Mithra, etc. Pour comprendre cette époque, on rappelle la comparaison désormais classique proposée par John North⁵ selon laquelle la religion serait un « market-place in religions ». Les auteurs mettent en relief l'importance de prendre en compte la spatialité des cultes, entre autre la localisation des sanctuaires à l'intérieur du tissu urbain.

1. E. Tagliaferro étudie dans le *Contra Apionem* de Flavius Joseph le concept d'identité qui émerge de l'apologie que l'auteur fait de son peuple et de sa tradition conforme aux lois mosaïques. L'auteur relève un détail particulièrement intéressant : dans l'Antiquité, l'identité juive n'était pas associée à des caractéristiques physiques comme on le verra dans la propagande antijuive du XIX^e et XX^e siècle, mis à part la circoncision qui permettait de distinguer les juifs des autres peuples antiques (mais pas de tous). Un autre critère abordé comme motif identitaire est celui de la langue, mais qui, lui aussi, n'est pas très présent dans l'identification du peuple juif. L'auteur parcourt les textes à la recherche de définitions qui se manifestent peu à peu. Les aspects qui semblent les plus pertinents pour Flavius Joseph sont les coutumes et les pratiques religieuses.
2. L. Renaut s'est intéressé aux contacts religieux à travers l'étude d'un passage de Tertullien, *De praescriptione haereticorum* 40, 4 dont il propose une lecture nouvelle en remplaçant le mot « frontibus » par « fontibus ». Cela permet à l'auteur de discuter la fameuse question de la marque sur le front des adeptes du culte de Mithra comme l'avaient les soldats de l'Antiquité tardive. L'auteur arrive à la conclusion que le marquage dans le culte de Mithra correspondait plutôt à un signe symbolique fait avec de l'eau et comparable à celui du baptême chrétien. Dans ce cadre, il

⁵ John North, « The Development of Religious Pluralism », in *The Jews among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire*. J. Lieu, J. North, T. Rajak (éd.), London-New York, 1992, p. 178.

réinterprète la scène du « miracle de la source » qui revient régulièrement dans le cycle des images mithriaques.

3. A. van den Kerchove étudie la conception du sacrifice dans les textes hermétiques. Elle arrive à la conclusion que les représentants de ces groupes religieux ont envers le sacrifice une attitude comparable à celle d'autres groupes religieux de l'époque, c'est-à-dire une critique de fond et un mépris qui le porte à préférer la prière comme forme de communication avec le divin.
4. M. Zago s'est occupée de la pluralité des langues présentes pour appeler les dieux dans les papyri magiques et plus particulièrement dans la *Kosmopoia*. La présence de noms provenant de différentes langues demandait des compétences spéciales à ceux qui devaient les prononcer. Elle est un signe de l'« inter-culturalité » de ces documents et des rites qui l'accompagnent.
5. L'article de C. Macris propose d'étudier la présence éventuelle des « hommes divins », c'est-à-dire des médiateurs de type charismatique dans les cultes orientaux, dont Pythagore est l'archétype. Mais C. Macris pose d'emblée les problèmes consistant surtout dans une documentation très vaste, hétéroclite et peu maîtrisable. Le cas analysé est celui du Syrien Eunous, dévot d'Atargatis. C. Macris analyse son rapport à la divinité protectrice dont dépendent ses pouvoirs. Il en conclut qu'il n'y a pas de raisons de distinguer les cultes orientaux d'autres types de cultes de l'Antiquité. Il suggère qu'on peut rapprocher ces hommes divins des saints hommes du judaïsme ainsi que de l'homme divin par excellence, c'est-à-dire Jésus.

La troisième partie, composée de six articles, porte sur les interférences et les interactions, les intégrations et les refus, les conversions et les prosélytismes. La partie introductive est signée par Ch. Auffarth et S. Ribichini. Les auteurs énoncent les résultats issus de la rencontre ainsi que les questions qui restent ouvertes sur la base de certains axes qui sont: la rencontre des religions dans un même lieu et en même temps; l'idée d'opposition et de déformation des images (comme les caricatures); l'idée de l'exclusivité et de la conversion; ainsi que l'idée de la construction d'une religion comme produit de marché.

1. M.-F. Baslez porte sur la continuité entre certains phénomènes d'extase qu'il y a dans le culte de la Mère des dieux à Pessinonte et dans le christianisme phrygien, en particulier celui des montanistes. Leurs prophètes comme les Galles sont « hors d'eux ». Leur mortification et leur souffrance sont aussi des éléments comparables à ceux des prêtres de

la Mère. Les auteurs chrétiens ont d'ailleurs souligné la castration de Montan.

2. M.-Y. Perrin étudie la conversion ou l'adhésion à une nouvelle religion. Il invite à lire avec prudence les récits de conversion comme celui de Paul: la recherche doit davantage tenir compte du contexte dans lequel ces conversions sont décrites ainsi que du sexe de l'individu. Il invite à prendre de la distance face aux récits proposés par les auteurs chrétiens.
3. I. Tanaseanu Döbler part de l'idée exprimée par Cumont que l'empereur Julien se serait converti aux cultes orientaux. Son analyse lui permet d'infirmer l'idée de Cumont. En effet, cette conversion n'en est pas une, car ces cultes n'étaient pas différents des autres cultes romains pratiqués à l'époque.
4. W. Löhr revient sur l'idée de conversion. Son point de départ est l'ouvrage classique de A. Nock⁶ qui fait coïncider l'idée de conversion avec celle qui est propre au christianisme. Il le revoit en rapport avec des études postérieures. Son attention se concentre sur les récits de conversion d'Augustin dans ses confessions, par exemple. Ces récits sont un moyen important pour rendre son chemin intérieur plausible aux yeux de ses contemporains et pour le présenter à travers une argumentation rationnelle.
5. B. Clausi traite de l'ascétisme chrétien et des « religions orientales » chez Ambroise et Jérôme. Les chrétiens louent leurs vertus supérieures à celles des « païens ». En particulier à propos de l'ascèse et de la virginité des femmes, ils essaient de montrer que les mêmes actes chez les païens étaient inférieurs. Ambroise exclut la possibilité même d'une comparaison, tandis que Jérôme est plus ouvert et relève des éléments de similitude avec les cultes romains. Sa critique se concentre surtout sur les hérésies avec lesquelles aucune comparaison n'est possible.
6. L'article conclusif de Ch. Auffarth porte sur les religions orientales dans le contexte des religions antiques et analyse un modèle théorique. Les échanges entre cultures ont toujours existé. Avec Pompée, la mer est libérée du danger des pirates et les échanges deviennent plus fréquents. Le contact permet la transmission de cultes, de la mode, de la musique, de recettes de cuisine, de rituels et d'idées religieuses. Les religions des *migrantes* sont établies par des personnes qui construisent et organisent des lieux de culte selon le modèle de leur lieu d'origine. Pour ceux-ci, la religion est encore liée à leur patrie, mais pour les générations suivantes, elle est déjà enracinée dans le contexte d'accueil. Les idées religieuses se

⁶ A. D. Nock, *Conversion. The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1933.

transmettent aussi grâce à des spécialistes voyageurs ou à des livres. Ce qui est le plus intéressant dans cette période impériale est non pas la nouveauté des cultes importés, mais la volonté et la capacité de les accueillir. L'auteur conclut son intervention en espérant que ces cultes importés plus récemment soient étudiés à côté des cultes connus depuis plus longtemps par les habitants de l'Empire et qui résistent dans ce vaste panorama de changements.

Ma présentation des articles ne rend pas justice à la richesse des ces travaux ni à la cohérence de ce livre. A la différence d'autres actes de colloque qui souvent donnent l'impression de monologues juxtaposés, cette œuvre témoigne clairement d'un concept fort de base et de la bonne entente des participants. Les articles en effet se répondent et ainsi, ils contribuent ensemble à approfondir les différentes facettes des problèmes soulevés. On ne peut omettre d'adresser une note positive à l'éditeur qui a permis la publication de longs extraits en grec et en latin dans le texte. Si cela rend la lecture un peu plus ardue (voire surtout l'article d'E. Sanzi), cela témoigne du sérieux de la publication et de sa volonté de défier la paresse des lecteurs.

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Yoga in the Modern World: Contemporary Perspectives. Edited by MARK SINGLETON, JEAN BYRNE, Routledge Hindu Studies Series. London and New York: Routledge, 2008. 12, 208 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-45258-8.

The volume (containing a programmatic introduction and nine articles in three parts) is committed to bridge the gap between practitioners and academics (some of the authors are both). If the selection is representative, contemporary practiced yoga is dominated by Ashtanga (Vinyasa) Yoga as taught by Pattabhi Jois followed by other branches of the Krishnamacharya tradition, Swami Sivananda and ‘haṭha yoga’. What distinguishes scholarly, academic practitioners from others and from popular media is called “depth of analysis” (which makes ‘analysis’ the primary scholarly activity, ‘depth’ its distinctive quality).

In the introduction emphasis is put on diversity (which in an edited volume is less than interdisciplinarity) and on potential for further research (a gesture of modesty hardly necessary given the quality of the collection; at the same time a programmatic claim which provokes reflection on whether it is *this* type of scholarly research which should determine our knowledge about yoga). The editors introduce yoga in the modern world as “contemporary” yoga which creates a historical framework rather than a typological mould (as would have those who talk about ‘Modern Yoga’). The goal of a search of sources raises the question as to which primary languages are being exploited? The contemporary yoga here researched is a predominantly English speaking phenomenon.

The bibliographies for each contribution contain some overlap, as is natural given the thematic closeness. The references to unpublished papers conveys an impression of how closely knit the academic community of yoga specialists is (at least in the English speaking world).

If, as the editors concede, we do not yet know, how to define yoga or how to describe its modern, globalized forms (apart from calling them modern, contemporary, or globalized) the methods employed in the “terrain of Modern Yoga Studies” gain importance (granting that methodology should distinguish scholarly approaches from all others — and, after all, “cutting edge scholarship” (2) is what the volume claims to present). There are historical studies based on textual sources, anthropological studies based on field work; authors are representatives of religious studies or history of religions, sociology, philosophy, theology; and there is a persistent search for conceptual tools to describe, to classify, to “understand”. There are recurrent thematic motifs like authority, authenticity, experience or spirituality.

An ambiguity in the title of the first part (“Mapping the Terrain of Modern Yoga Studies”) helps to pinpoint the permeability of the border between

studied object and the study itself. The “terrain of Modern Yoga Studies” could announce a survey of modern studies on yoga but also an account of what these studies did or should study, in particular studies of Modern Yoga. The three contributions represent both.

Elizabeth De Michelis (“Modern Yoga: History and Forms”, pp. 17–35) begins with her knowledgeable summary of the historical background (on two pages!): Yoga is compared to a building, to understand it is to be able to describe its architecture — evidence of a kind of essentialist approach partly shared by the editors. To develop “models” is a scholarly activity relatively far removed from the sources. The generous bibliographical references (occasionally with qualifying additions) suggest a unanimity about “Hinduism” which can exist only in the perspective of such a survey. The postulate that contemporary practice should be “judged [sic] in its own terms” abandons the historical perspective in favour of (value) judgements which let the belief studied frameworks encompass the scholar who studies them. Comparison is practiced in historical perspective when “key differences” between modern and pre-modern forms of Yoga are registered, viz. differences of Thought concerning the *karma/saṃsāra/mokṣa* complex. Secularization, privatization, commodification (viz. commercialization), modalization are the catchwords around which a wide spectrum of characteristics, problem areas and questions are assembled — a case of theories which concern “modern” more than “yoga”?

The second contribution in part I by Joseph A. Alter (“Yoga *Shivir*: Performativity and the Study of Modern Yogas”, pp. 36–48) is methodologically the report on anthropological field work in India (thus about ‘yoga in modern India’), being the attempt to arrive at understanding by describing (gathering ethnographic data) and analyzing (here, the performances of yoga camps as “meta-commentaries on the nature and meaning of yoga in practice”). This allows to understand people’s concerns, hopes, believes about “yogic truth” and at the same time to tackle “the ethical problem of questioning truth claims while trying to understand how and why they are made” (38). Relativism, perspectivity and skepticism need not be abandoned when studying performativity. The example is provided by just one episodic description (Mussoorie 2007), with little historical perspective, and one (text-based) description of the institutional strategy of the Bharatiya Yog Sansthan.

The article by Sarah Strauss (“‘Adapt, Adjust, Accommodate’: the Production of Yoga in a Transnational World”, pp. 49–74) is the only one reprinted (orig. 2002), endorsed by the editors’ conviction that it should be known more widely. It presents a portrait (overview) of the Divine Life Society (founded by Swami Sivananda) and its objectives and strategies for the

dissemination, in print, of spiritual knowledge in universal unity and national identity. Historical perspective is provided by brief references to Swami Vivekananda and to the institutions founded by Sri Yogendra, Swami Kuvalayananda and to the Vivekananda Kendra of Bangalore and their nationalist messages. Strauss' article documents a stage of yoga research prior to the introduction of the term "Modern Yoga" as defined technical term. Yet, Strauss, though closer to Yoga in India as a network of experiences and communications through her field work, does not avoid theory altogether. Concepts like "community of practice" and "reorientation" might prove helpful to combine social and historical perspectives when describing yoga also in other contexts.

The title of the second section, "Posturing for Authenticity", plays with the importance of postures in the contemporary understanding of yoga. Historicization and legitimization are the processes in which the editors place the chosen examples for a search for authenticity as a concern of insiders but also a distinctive mark of historical analysis of the sources by outsiders in historical or comparative contexts.

Mark Singleton ("The Classical Reveries of Modern Yoga : Patañjali and Constructive Orientalism", pp. 77–99) examines the use of the Yogasūtras as textual authority for (modern) claims to authenticity. He documents convincingly that "yoga" in India did not primarily mean Patañjali, nor imply "philosophy". The terminology suggests that what happened had already occurred or existed before, yet the domination of philosophy, practice, spirituality, encounter (etc.) is more likely historically unique and new, even though comparable developments and constellations (and terminology) apply to 'classical' Indian dance. Singleton elaborates this comparison and its parallels in the second part of his paper, as a welcome widening of perspective on yoga as a cultural phenomenon and of how "classical" became applicable to yoga.

Kenneth Liberman ("The Reflexivity of the Authenticity of *Haṭha* Yoga", pp. 100–116) collects historical information to relativize the authenticity claim of origins (while "classical" yoga and *Haṭha* Yoga have always been syncretistic and "a hotchpotch"), the identity of something essentialized as "yoga", and consequently the identity of being "Indian" — even in the Indian perception of it. The reflexivity (by turning 'back' to India, or by turning to a 'pure' origin or to a 'classical' text) which seems to make authenticity impossible is a historical fact. Yoga in India today is the reflection of a reflection, it is "considerably influenced by the validation of yoga that has emerged in the West during the last century." (110) Liberman proposes criteria ("as guidelines for what can be authentic in yoga today", 111) like overcoming egoism, practice of *yama* and *niyama* as moral practices, cultivation of spirituality, social service, self-control. These criteria are to be authenticated by a lived guru-disciple

tradition (or several, as Liberman cites several of his teachers). Reflection about a historical contextualization of these criteria is not part of the essay but is certainly stimulated by it.

Part III is entitled “Spirituality, Sexuality, and Authority: Understanding the Experience of Contemporary Yoga Practice” and thus resumes some of the key words of the subsumed titles.

Klas Nevrein (“Empowerment and Using the Body in Modern Postural Yoga”, pp. 119–139) embeds yogic practice and/or its results as a context for “understanding the body as a locus of experience” (122). However, he cannot dissolve the dilemma that experience remains distinct from what is said about it. The study of experience becomes a study of texts and theories about experiences and their physiological, emotional, “existential”, social effects (Nevrein cites authors on kinaesthesia, movement analysis, body philosophy).

Benjamin Richard Smith’s analysis (to a large extent descriptive) is restricted to Pattabhi Jois’s Ashtanga Yoga (“‘With Heat Even Iron Will Bend’: Discipline and Authority in Ashtanga Yoga”, pp. 140–160) and documents (in its first part) that “emphasis on *tapas* lies at the heart of Pattabhi Jois’s Ashtanga Yoga” (151). The second part describes how authority and discipline are put into practice in Jois’s style of teaching. Awareness of historical continuities and changes in an intercultural history (cf. 148) characterize the approach. However, Smith is misled by the translation of “viria” (more correctly *vīrya*) by “Vital Life Force” in a quoted passage (146) to speculate about the “shift from semen to blood” as example of the transformations in “the understanding of the practice of yoga” (147). Well, *vīrya* meant semen before being purified and abstracted to Vital Life Force in translation. Any understanding of yoga based on such a transformation is simply a misunderstanding of a Sanskrit word.

Stuart Ray Sarbacker (“The Numinous and Cessative in Modern Yoga”, pp. 161–183) begins with an exceptionally dense paragraph summarizing his perspective on (modern) yoga and its dynamics activated by differences of teleology (i.e., of the goals to be attained by yoga). Numinous and cessative are terms used by Sarbacker in his earlier research and here applied to “Modern Yoga” (the convention to capitalize in titles and the shadows of De Michelis’ typology necessitate Sarbacker’s footnote 1 to clarify his understanding of “modern”). One need not find the terminology a happy choice. “The numinous in this context indicates that the practice of bodily and contemplative discipline yields powers of action and perception that are typically predicated of a divine being (*deva*, *devatā*) or set of beings.” (166) “Numinous” has been too defined a term, unless R. Otto and much of the science of religion influenced by him are blocked from view, to make such a redefinition spontaneously convincing. But Sarbacker practices a stimulating combination of two

methodological steps: describing and explaining. The morphology of the “numinous” discovers a useful parameter in Weber’s classification of powers as structural or antistructural. An Indian way of classification and of saying this might be the opposition of *dharma* (structure) and *saṃnyāsa* (antistructure). Who was first committed to a bi-polar pattern of classification and logic (“logic” being a term frequently used and worthy of a study when embarking on a second level study of yoga studies)?

Mikel Burley (“From Fusion to Confusion: A Consideration of Sex and Sexuality in Traditional and Contemporary Yoga”, pp. 184–203) sets out to tell the story of yoga’s relation to sex and sexuality sketched by three snapshots (not well focussed, unfortunately) on gendered metaphysics (Sāṃkhya and Śatapathabrāhmaṇa — in that order), on the imagery of eroticism in Haṭhayoga and Tantric symbology (another example of how the goal determines what “yoga” is and does, here drawing on a Christian model of seeing the human act as homologous to divine love — for which then Śiva provides the Indian prototype), and on chastity in contemporary yoga schools (Sivananda, B. K. S. Iyengar, K. P. Jois). The intention to take confusion and contradictions “as opportunities for a more discerning inquiry into yoga’s intricate past” (185) is valid methodological advice, not yet substantiated enough, however, to turn the story into history.

To sum up, the object of research is modern (and “Modern”) yoga, the perspectives of looking at (viz. researching) the object are “contemporary”, academic contexts (disciplines, methods, styles) are multiple (historical, descriptive, polemical, typological). Each contributor develops his or her own conceptual tools for dealing with the topic. It is left to the readers to contextualize what defines the coherence of “yoga” and of yoga research. What yoga research — and that in an interdisciplinary and international setting — seems to require next are conceptual tools to deal not just with yoga but with yoga research — and that covers a large part of what is called religion — on a meta-level. The volume at hand, or rather its editors and authors contribute significantly and stimulatingly to this task — to be continued!

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- Cole, Alan, *Fathering your Father. The Zen of Fabrication in Tang Buddhism* — Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 368 p., £ 19.95, ISBN 978-0-520-25485-5 (pbk.).
- Despland, Michel, *Bastide on Religion. The Invention of Candomblé*. Key Thinkers in the Study of Religion Series — London, Oakville, Equinox, 2008, xi + 147 p., £ 14.99, ISBN 978-1-84553-366-3 (pbk.).
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- Divry, Edouard, *La Transfiguration selon l'Orient et l'Occident*. Collection «Croire et Savoir», n° 54 — Paris, Editions Pierre Téqui, 2009, 565 p., € 36.-, ISBN 978-2-7403-1442-5 (pbk.).
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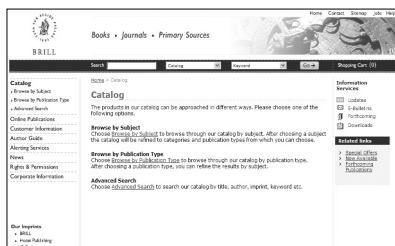
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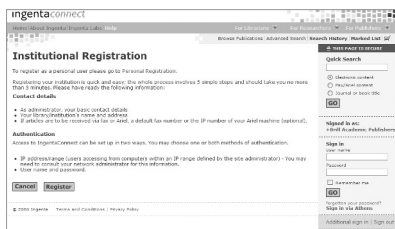
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